

(Unofficial translation)

**Opening Statement**  
**by**  
**H.E. Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra**  
**Prime Minister of Thailand**  
**on the Inauguration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit**  
**20 May 2013**  
**at the International Convention and Exhibition Centre Commemorating His Majesty's**  
**7th Cycle Birthday Anniversary, Chiang Mai, Thailand**

**Your Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah of Brunei Darussalam,**  
**Messrs. Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers,**  
**Distinguished Representatives from the Asia-Pacific Countries,**  
**Excellencies,**  
**Distinguished Guests,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, the people of Thailand including Chiang Mai citizens, I have the pleasure to extend my warm welcome to all of you. We, Thai people, are highly honored to have been provided an opportunity to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit. On my part, I am especially proud and impressed as Chiang Mai is my hometown. I would, therefore, like to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to all of you for the honor given me and the Chiang Mai citizens on this special occasion.

**Excellencies,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

'Water' is 'life'. All human beings realize that 'lack of water' is 'lack of life'. On the other hand, the power of excessive water overflow or inundation is destructive and it could take lives of human beings' not less than conditions of drought and water shortage.

As water acts as a link to existence; enhances life quality; serves as a transportation channel; remains a vital factor of production in agricultural and industrial sectors which maintains well-being of humankind; and is the foundation for food security as well as sustainable development, water is thus considered a resource and asset of all mankind, not a person or a country. I, then, do agree with a statement made by H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations saying that 'water' is a matter of human rights which should be protected.

Accordingly, the meetings held at this venue during the past week and being organized today are very crucial as they correspond with the United Nations International Year of Water Cooperation which is aimed for consultation and discussion on important issues related to water security and water-related disasters.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On my part, I view that nature must maintain its balance in the ecosystem. Water balance would affect balance in the living of mankind and other living creatures. However, as regards water-related issues, the imbalance incurred is multidimensional. This is a principal reason for our gathering here in order to exchange opinions to address those problems.

It is a fact that most water on this planet is saline water while fresh water is available in much less proportion. Day by day, human beings have wastefully exploited fresh water; have destroyed sources of water, either by deforestation or environmental contamination and pollution, thus causing global warming and greenhouse effect, resulting in diminution of clean fresh water and a cause of illnesses. In the meantime, sea level rises as a result of polar ice melting. Several islands or even a country are prone to subsidence into the ocean. Alongside, various types of storms, i.e. hurricanes, tornadoes, cyclones or rainstorms have intensified causing widespread unprecedented disasters. Academia in water sector and ecosystem believe that impending crises of mankind would be related to water security. Some even forecasted that fighting for water would become a cause of war in future.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In the Asia-Pacific region, climate change similarly impacts the life of its inhabitants. From statistics, the population of Asia accounts for sixty percent of the world population. However, the percentage of people who can access water is accounted for only thirty percent of the global water quantity. Every one in five people in the region lacks access to clean and safe drinking water.

Meanwhile, Asia remains the most disaster-prone region in the world. While many people believe that this century would be the gold era of the Asia-Pacific region with respect to economic growth, such a dream would not be fulfilled unless we committed ourselves to seriously solving water resources management problems.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to take this opportunity to share Thailand's experience with you. From the first day of my assumption to the position of Prime Minister of Thailand, the Thai government, Thai people, and myself, have united efforts to weather the most severe and massive flood in our history. Many people died and thousands of them became homeless. We completely lost our Gross Domestic Product during the first quarter of 2011 aggravating the country development to suffer a loss in the said year.

Notwithstanding the above, it is gratifying to note that Thailand could ultimately overcome that gigantic flood – thanks to unity of the Thai people and close cooperation among all sectors in the Thai society. It is significant to iterate that we could turn a crisis to an opportunity. The Thai government has invested an amount of twelve billion US dollars in the entire water resource management system.

In the implementation, we have followed the initiatives by His Majesty the King, who has been dedicating himself all along to resolving water-related problems of the Thai people. Such implementation has consequently retrieved confidence among communities as well as the world business sector. Presently, I am happy to state that our economic growth could rise up to 6.4 percent last year.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In regard to water resources management, we should attach importance to comprehensive and coordinated implementation of the entire system. Natural disasters do not recognize the border or differences in people. Water flows from highland to lowland geographically by gravity. We should, therefore, collaborate in strengthening water security.

Emphasis should be made on solving problems at the source as well as diminishing human activities that would create climate change. From my own experience, the costs of collaborative planning and investment in prevention are less than damages incurred by problem solving and recovery after disaster and inundation. Collaboration in effective and creative water resources management could be beneficial to the agricultural and industrial sectors that would further lead to wealth of the people and the nation.

Yet, one country in the region, itself, could not cope with those challenges. Our sole option is to create a driving force for closer cooperation at the regional and global levels. We, Thailand, are ready to join all of you to fully participate in the implementation of necessary activities to meet such challenges.

*We shall participate in reforestation and conservation of headwaters sources.*

*We shall participate in reduction of pollution and global warming.*

*We shall affirm our determination to enable all citizens to access clean water sources.*

*We shall participate in an establishment of a water resources management system covering from upstream- midstream- till downstream at the national, regional and global levels.*

*We shall participate in an invention of accurate and efficient weather forecasting and early warning systems by applying appropriate technologies.*

I am pleased to learn that the discussions made during the past few days comprised exchange of opinions on various issues such as Nexus of Economic, Food and Water Security; Urban Water Security; Environmental Water Security; Household Water Security; and Water Risks and Resilience, etc.

I do support the realization of those good initiatives.

Finally, I do hope that the countries in the Asia-Pacific region will cooperate with those in other regions in the United Nations forum and others to manage climate change, promote a holistic approach in sustainable water resources management, and reduce risk of water-related disaster. Whilst efforts have been made to manage those issues as a part of the Millennium Development Goals, it should be assured that the aforementioned issues be also included in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

I hope that this Water Summit will forge continued partnership among all of us in strengthening the Asia-Pacific region to be resilience to water-related disasters.

Thank you.