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**PERMANENT MISSION OF THAILAND
GENEVA**

14 October B.E. 2556 (2013)

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I wish to refer to your joint letter dated 28 May 2013 regarding the alleged information received concerning a statement made by Mr. Plodprasop Suraswadi, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, prior to the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit held in May 2013 in Chiang Mai.

In this connection, I have the honour to transmit herewith the clarification on the above-mentioned case, as received from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand (MNRE). I wish to also highlight that the Ministry encouraged the participation of all stakeholders in the said Water Summit where representatives from civil society and experts from 25 major watershed areas across the country were invited to participate in public meetings and exhibitions. I hope that the information provided would address your concerns and be helpful for the preparation of your respective report.

The Permanent Mission of Thailand remains at your disposal should you require additional information.

Yours sincerely,

(Thani Thongphakdi)

Ambassador and Permanent Representative

Mr. Frank La Rue,
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression,
Mr. Maina Kiai,
Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association,
Ms. Margaret Sekaggya,
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders,
Ms. Catarina de Albuquerque,
Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation,
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,
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Fax 022 917 9006

Reference : AL G/SO 214(67-17) Assemble & Association (2010-1) G/SO 214(107-9) Water (2008-1)

Clarification by the Royal Thai Government on the statement made by Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Plodprasop Suraswadi, prior to the 2nd Asia Pacific Water Summit

Summary of allegations

- According to media reports, on 12 May 2013, prior to the opening of the 2nd Asia Pacific Water Summit, Mr. Plodprasop Suraswadi, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, allegedly warned environmental activists, water-resources activists and other members of the civil society not to protest during the summit otherwise they would be arrested.
- The warning by Mr. Suraswadi raised concerns among both the local and international community. His actions were seen as prohibiting legitimate activities of human rights defenders, namely the exercise of their rights to freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of peaceful assembly.

Reply to the allegations

- As Party to both the ICCPR and the ICESCR, Thailand has always supported and promoted the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Thailand is home to numerous civil society organizations and media organisations, which demonstrates its openness to and acceptance of different values and views.
- Despite concerns to the contrary, there was vibrant debate and civil society participation in and around the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit.
- At the Water Summit, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment encouraged the participation of all stakeholders, including civil society groups. In particular, representatives from different watershed committees comprising representatives from concerned state agencies, civil society and experts from 25 major watershed areas across the country were invited to participate in public seminars and exhibitions and to engage in open discussions on water resource management. Furthermore, these representatives were invited to participate in the events during the Summit without registration fees.
- In addition, civil society groups were able to initiate parallel events to advocate their cause related to water issues. For example, watershed groups from the Northern and Northeastern parts of Thailand organized a public seminar which provided space for constructive criticism on the government's water-related policies. The seminar took place free of any interference by state authorities, and the outcome of the seminar was made available to the public online. News articles criticizing the outcome of the Summit were also widely published in major newspapers in Thailand.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand
October 2013

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