

Opening Remarks
By H.E. Paiboon Wattanasiritham

Distinguished participants, friends, ladies and gentlemen it is a great pleasure to be among all of you. I cannot help but feel overwhelmed by the intellectual strength gathered in this academic arena. I had to decide whether to give my written or spoken speech; with your permission, I would like to present my spoken address which draws more from my heart and experience.

To mainstream human security, we need to witness a shift in the development paradigm: from economic wealth to societal wealth, and in the context of security, from national to human security. After many years, the objective of development remains economic wealth. This is, of course, equally the case in Thailand.

However, there seems to be steady progress to suggest a gradual shift from economic wealth to societal wealth and well-being. Perhaps we can look at the recent events in Thailand to provide evidence of such a shift. In 2007, Gross National Happiness (GNH) has been brought to the academic forefront. In essence, GNH examines a more holistic approach to societal health by including concepts of peace and happiness. Here the emphasis has been inverted from individual happiness to mutual happiness. In Thailand, we have also had the benefit of our beloved king's promotion of a society with balance and ethics, a concept widely known as the sufficiency economy.

There has also been progress at the grassroots level through self-actualized community empowerment initiatives. Many grassroots communities have been able to create their own visions of development akin to the aforementioned concept of society health. When communities collectively conceptualize and manage their own plans, personal economic pursuits are sacrificed for the well-being of the community. In some instances, leaders have even set up indicators of community development to quantify such principles as peace, happiness, welfare and security.

Your subject matter is mainstreaming human security in Asia. The fact that you are holding this conference is, in itself, an opportunity to exchange information and knowledge between the many countries represented. As academics, your activities will include knowledge creation and knowledge management, both within the academic communities and institutions themselves, but also for society at large.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think you have organized a worthwhile conference on human security. I have noticed there are many useful and inspiring topics which cover many stances on the issues. I equally encourage you to take the opportunity to learn more about the political changes and developments in Thailand. All the best for a pleasant conference stay in Thailand.