



FOREWORD

His Excellency Thaksin Shinawatra

Prime Minister of Thailand

It is my pleasure and honour to introduce the second UNDP National Human Development Report of Thailand.

At the beginning of the new millennium, all nations are eager to focus on poverty alleviation in its broadest sense, not just from an economic and technical perspective as tended to be the case during most of the 20th century. UNDP's focus on "human development" provides an excellent framework for this broader approach and matches well with Thailand's own "people-centred approach" to development.

Globalization has tended to divert attention from this broader perspective, focusing too often exclusively on economic growth and its attendant opportunities. While such employment creation is indispensable to poverty reduction, it is not sufficient in itself. Yes, it provides opportunities but it also threatens traditional values. As a result, local communities feel a compelling need to balance these global forces with greater control over their lives, seeking inner strength through community empowerment.

In Thailand, itself engaged in a powerful process of democratization, this dialectic – between the global and the local – has been steadily growing, especially in the past two decades. We understand the need to reconcile these sometimes-conflicting forces, and the deeply felt need of people to assert their own interests and values. We know that values and wisdom of all sorts exist in the Thai community and that these must be harnessed for the greater benefit of our society.

The challenge is how best to accomplish this and I believe that this report provides many useful insights. It is clear that community empowerment in Thailand means evolving an entirely new enabling environment for rights and accountability, indeed, a whole new way of thinking. *"The challenges of today's problems, and tomorrow's cannot be met with yesterday's solutions, suitable as they may have been to yesterday's problems."* This kind of development is long-term work to which the Thai government is actively committed, inspired by His Majesty the King's advice on self-reliance and sufficiency economy.

I have no doubt that many organizations will be moved and inspired by this particular Report. I believe it will assist understanding of the issue and create an opportunity for us all to support and promote community empowerment both as a means to, and as an end of human development.

(Thaksin Shinawatra)
Prime Minister of Thailand