

Opening remarks

by

**H.E. Mr. Virachai Plasai, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of the Kingdom of Thailand to the United Nations
for the World Soil Day 2016**

“Soils and pulses, a symbiosis for life and for halting soil degradation”

Friday 2 December 2016, 09.30 - 12.30 hrs.

Conference Room 12, Conference Building, United Nations Headquarters

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- On behalf of all the co-hosts, namely the Permanent Mission of Lesotho, the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Thailand, the Permanent Mission of Turkey, together with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), it is indeed my distinct honour to welcome you all to this special event to commemorate World Soil Day.

- As we are all aware, the UN General Assembly decided 3 years ago to designate 5 December, which coincides with the Birthday of His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, World Soil Day to be celebrated every year worldwide. This is indeed a recognition for His Majesty’s lifelong work on soil science, which over the years has significantly contributed to improving the quality of lives of millions through sustainable soil management.

- For His Majesty King Bhumibol, and I quote, soil is a vital endowment given by Mother Nature, from which we derived the essentials of life itself, and therefore lies at the heart of human survival. This royal quotation sums up the indispensability of soil to life, as soil fertility and better quality of life are inseparably intertwined.

- Our celebration of the World Soil Day this year coincides with the International Year of Pulses. The two events are indeed complementary to each other and mutually reinforcing. The symbiosis between soils and pulses is vital to human's livelihood. Without healthy soils, pulses cannot grow. In the same vein, pulses greatly contribute to soil fertility, as they halt soil degradation, improve soil structure and maintain soil biodiversity. The inextricable link between soils and pulses is key to resilient food systems, sustainable agriculture development, and beyond.

- Bearing that in mind, we, the co-hosts, have tirelessly been working for the cause of sustainable agriculture. To be precise, **Lesotho** has been focusing on mitigating the devastating impacts of soil degradation and regenerating arable land, while **Turkey** has been raising awareness on the significant contribution of pulses to food and nutrition security as well as addressing a number of environmental challenges.

- For Thailand, as a major food producing country, we attach great importance to sustainable soil management. It is our firm belief that soil lays a solid foundation for the overarching objective of sustainable development, with the first and foremost of objective of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

- Beyond our national boundary, Thailand has been very active in sharing our experience and best practices on sustainable soil use and management with other countries and will always continue to do so. In this connection, we have been promoting the development of soil information system and inventories through the **Global Soil Partnership (GSP)** and the **Asian Soil Partnership (ASP)**, using innovative techniques and tools to collect soil data for farmers. We also support integrated land management and conservation of soil and water for sustainable farming, which lead to better soil quality and food productivity and more effective mitigation of any negative impacts on downstream farmers and industries. In addition, we do our best to foster a better understanding of and place a strong emphasis on the importance of soil ecology, encouraging public participation, networking and coherence of policies and regulations on land management.

- Apart from the technical expertise on sustainable soil management, Thailand also takes great pride to share with the world His Majesty King Bhumibol's **Sufficiency Economy Philosophy**. This is His Majesty's legacy that has become the guiding light for Thais from all walks of life for decades, with a vision that places people at the heart of development. In essence, the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy encourages people to live their lives with moderation, reasonableness and resilience on the basis of virtue, integrity and knowledge. With this Philosophy at the core of mindset, His Majesty introduced numerous theories and royal development projects regarding soil rehabilitation and forest management for agricultural benefit, among many other sectors. These projects in turn helped promote food security and improve livelihood of the Thai people. A selection of His Majesty's royal development projects are currently on exhibition at the Delegates' Entrance, which I encourage you all to visit.

- We will now have the opportunity to learn more about His Majesty's work on soil and related topics from our distinguished speakers today. I am confident that with their expertise and knowledge, we will have a fruitful session today. May I now invite the first speaker, H.E. Mr. Kobsak Chutikul, former Thai Ambassador and former Member of Parliament, to take the floor. Thank you.
