Opening Address by  
Dr. Kittipong Kittayarak,  
Permanent Secretary for Justice  
At the Opening Ceremony of the 36th HONLEA Meeting  
30 October 2012, United Nations Conference Room 3  
Bangkok, Thailand  

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Mr. Gary Lewis, UNODC Regional Representative for East Asia and the Pacific  
Mr. Ian Munro, Chief of Anti-Trafficking Section, UNODC  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  

It is indeed my great honor to be here today for the Thirty-Sixth Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Asia and the Pacific. On behalf of the Ministry of Justice, Thailand, I would like to officially welcome you all to our beautiful city. Welcome to Bangkok.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the UNODC for organizing this important event in collaboration with the Office of Narcotic Control Board of Thailand. I am delighted to see distinguished delegates from drug law enforcement agencies across the region gather here to discuss means for enhancing cooperation in response to the problem of illicit drugs which is one of the most challenging and serious threats in our society today.
As we all know, drug trafficking often associates closely with organized criminal groups. With the constantly changing nature of crime that keeps outpacing the criminal justice authorities, it is necessary to tackle this problem in a comprehensive and holistic manner. I would like to stress that we need to create common measures, as well as strengthen mechanisms for regional and cross-regional cooperation in order to effectively control the criminal activities related to illicit drug production and trafficking.

Thailand has put considerable effort in the implementation of drug control measures. One recent development is the setting up of the National Command Center for Drug Elimination (NCCDE) to harmonize all drug control activities in the country and to effectively monitor their progress. Since its establishment last September, the Center has played a crucial role in detecting several cases of drug smuggling which led to the seizure of over 80 million tablets of methamphetamine and 1.2 tons of crystallized methamphetamine. The quantity of illicit drug seized this year shows a significant increase compared to that of last year. While such increase may testify to the efficacy of the new National Command Center, it is also a call for continuing commitment.
Thailand places a strong emphasis on information-sharing and cross-border cooperation. While the Government of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra has put drug control on the national agenda, we continue to support the regional cooperation mechanism. Against such backdrop, Thailand was proud to host the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters in Bangkok at the end of August 2012. The main purpose of this meeting was to encourage all ASEAN member countries to accelerate their drug control policy implementation in order to achieve the goal of Drug-Free ASEAN in 2015.

Significant effort has been made also to update the legal framework to strengthen international cooperation in crime control which would be helpful in prosecuting cross-border drug trafficking. The amendment of the law on mutual legal assistance has been initiated and the law on extradition has been enhanced in order to reflect the current international standard. We have also put in place the laws which allow for asset forfeiture in cases involving illicit drugs and the use of the asset seizure fund to support drug suppression work, with respect to the rule of law and the rights of all those involved.

Distinguished delegates,

Although the capacity of law enforcement mechanism is vital to counter illicit drug activities, it is important to note that constant changes in trends and
patterns of production, and the emerging of new psychotropic substances made drug problem quite complicated. During the 55th Session of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Thailand has pledged its commitment to the balanced approach in implementing drug control strategies and addressing the root cause of the problem.

As witnessed in many countries, eradication of drugs only yields short-term success, as it often drives a wedge between the government and the local people. To achieve a longer-term solution, it is essential to address the problem at the root-cause including poverty and the lack of opportunity that force people to criminality. In many cases, alternative development could play an important role in tackling the root cause of the drugs trafficking cycle. I am pleased to inform you that last year, Thailand, in association with the Government of Peru, and in close collaboration with UNODC, hosted the International Workshop on Sustainable Alternative Development, to gather effort and experiences from various countries in the hope to set up international guideline for an effective alternative development programs in drug-producing areas. I would like to encourage you to review best practices and lesson learned to see if there may be any measure applicable to your social context, and more importantly to share your valuable inputs in our effort to finalize the draft International Guiding Principles on Alternative Development.

Distinguished delegates,
To conclude my remark, I would like to reiterate my firm belief that this HONLEA Meeting will provide a great opportunity for all of us to have fruitful discussion on the innovative measures, as well as the effective cooperation, to tackle the illicit drug situation. I would like to thank UNODC again for providing critical support for this meeting and for always playing an active role in supporting drug control measures in the region. I am very much hope that our common goal of drug-free society is not too far to achieve.

Thank you very much.