

National Broadcast
by General Prayut Chan-o-cha,
Head of the National Council for Peace and Order,
on 6 June 2014

Good evening to all Thai people from all sectors who have given valuable support to the work of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) in moving our country forward.

Let me reiterate that there were many reasons as to why it was necessary for the NCPO to take control of national administration since 22 May. The most important of these is because we respect democracy. Our decision was based on the fact that our three main branches of government – executive, legislative, and judiciary – were being undermined by the political situation at the time. We therefore have had to safeguard democracy. We have maintained that our efforts are to make our country stronger and ready to move towards becoming a fully functioning democratic Kingdom.

There was widespread conflict throughout all sections of the society. As we saw, this led to the breakdown of the rule of law. General laws were ineffective in maintaining internal stability. Special laws such as the Internal Security Act, an Emergency Decree, and Martial Law, had to be subsequently invoked. Independent agencies were unable to fully perform their duties and the judicial system was not working effectively. People started to lose trust and faith in the whole system. Laws were not being respected. We were thus becoming an immoral society. A society without morality, without virtue, without good governance, could not move forward. As His Majesty the King has clearly and always shown us, good governance is very important.

State officials were being controlled by corrupted individuals, political parties, and populist schemes. The country was virtually paralyzed. There were some good things, but I am only mentioning the problems here tonight. As a result, there was widespread conflict at all levels. Society, the economy, and our international relations were all being affected. We were losing trust and confidence from the international community.

We understand that we are living in a democratic world, but we must also examine ourselves to see how Thailand can be resilient in the face of the many challenges that democracy brings. We therefore need to adjust ourselves in many ways - from administration methods to the budget system, even the electoral system - the starting point of democracy itself. Checks and balances need to be improved. Parliamentary dictatorship has to be removed.

All these challenges have so far caused conflict among Thai people. We were unhappy as a nation. So I had to ask myself "how can we let this continue?" Remember that we had already tried everything to resolve the problem through peaceful means. None were successful. This situation had been going on for more than 9 years, and the past 6 months has been the most intense. There were many deaths, injuries, losses, and resulting legal trials, many of which are still unresolved.

So what we are doing today is to try and bring everything back to normal. We intend to return happiness to everyone living in Thailand, both Thais and foreigners; expand cooperation with our partners, and prepare ourselves for the ASEAN Community and AEC in the near future.

Today, there are people who agree with us as well as people who do not. That is normal. But for the future plan for national administration, I will mainly consider the criticisms to keep improving. These viewpoints will be carefully considered and analyzed. If they prove to be of benefit for the nation, I will turn them into actions. It

is normal to have people who disagree with you when you take on such an important task. But please be assured that we are doing the best we can in order to achieve our goal of a fully functioning democracy which is accepted by all sides.

At present, general laws and martial law are still necessary. In the past, people were not respecting the general law. Although today we are using the highest security law, not all components are being exercised but only those that we deemed necessary. There may be some disruptions, or inconveniencies, so we are asking for your understanding. If we cannot keep the situation under control after invoking martial law, then no other laws in the world will work in Thailand. We will try to return to the use of normal laws as soon as possible, but people have to respect the law. I do not want the international community to view us as lawless people who use violence as a means to get what we want. We have to change this perception.

If these conflicts and violence continues, a successful and peaceful election is impossible. If the elections were to take place and a government was formed amidst conflict, violence, and protests, will the problem be resolved?

As for the establishment of National Reconciliation Center, it is just the first phase. It is being established to give people an opportunity to talk to each other after the prolonged conflict. NCPO will act as an observer, a facilitator. We will collect ideas from all sides as well as use information gathered by previous attempts in order to encourage national reconciliation. We welcome all sides; conflicting groups, political parties, and we will discuss all issues. We are inviting all to participate in this effort so that we can move onto the second phase – the forming of a government, a reform committee and a legislative committee.

In order to achieve reconciliation, some special activities will have to implemented including recreational and entertainment events. This is so that the people can relax and rekindle communication channels that had long been overcome by political

posturing. We want to stop all conflicts. This is just the first phase. In the second phase, everything will be resolved through the law as well as the reform committee.

Many people are concerned that we may be rushing through the process. I can assure you that I am doing all I can to prevent any conflict from recurring in the second phase. If conflicts are still unresolved, the reform committee will not work. So, once again, I am asking for your understanding and support.

In the past, people only choose to receive information from the media sources that appeal to them. Some of the prolonged problems that I have mentioned may have started out more than 9 years, or 6 months ago. Some have been going on for decades without being resolved through the existing democratic process. So today we are giving an opportunity for all government officials to work for the country, for the people, and for the King. If national administration is improved in all aspects including integration of all government operations by connecting plans, budget, and people, this will reflect a good beginning. From there, smaller units will benefit. If we do not start at the top, then it will not succeed. It will not solve the problems. And the Thai people will suffer.

As for the international community, we are asking for your patience to give us time as we build our country, our democracy, a true democracy for Thai people with order and real understanding, a democracy with good governance in accordance with the philosophies bestowed to the Thai people by His Majesty the King. Everybody is equal in a society with morals, compassion, and unity. We have to look ahead and see at what is best for the people.

The NCPO has been working for only 2 weeks. We have given our priority to solving the problems concerning people with low income. We have continued the operations of all 21 ministries in accordance with the NCPO's policies. We listened to all sides and consider all suggestions and use them as guidance. Existing procedures are

reviewed, adjusted, and improved through brainstorming and discussions between government officials and the NPCO.

Projects that do not impose a large burden on the national budget system will be carried out. Corruption will be dealt with. Individuals who were found to be guilty will be prosecuted. All these will be transparent.

For security issues which fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, the Interior Ministry, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we need to prepare for the upcoming ASEAN Community and the AEC. Today we already have set policies under designated responsible agencies. This is important in order for us to regain confidence from the international community. I have instructed all agencies to go ahead in expediting the assignments within the regulations and framework of the Office of the National Economics and Social Development Board, the Budget Bureau, and the Finance Ministry. There will be an evaluation process. Projects that are not beneficial will be reconsidered. Cooperation with our partners from the public or private sectors will be continued and promoted. Cooperation between the military and people along the border areas will also be enhanced. Some of these activities have been assigned to security agencies. Some are being restructured to ensure more effective results. As for the establishment of factories and labour control, these are necessary in order to create job opportunities and discourage people from migrating to the central region or Bangkok to find work, which will lead to more problems associated with congestion and urbanization.

Security issues are very important. It is not the responsibility of the military and the police only. It is the responsibility of all people. It is the duty of all citizens. If you do not help the authorities, the problem may lead to violence and security personnel may have to use force. Everyone has to learn to look after themselves and prevent conflict

between people and officials - like in developed countries where people respect the law, while security officials are there to provide safety and look after the people.

As for the development of the military, I will oversee the development process which includes personnel, structure, and equipment development. This will be in accordance with the existing plan. These are all national security issues which need to be conveyed to the international community through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology.

We are also concerned with the problems of the farmers. At present, we cannot rush to sell the rice stockpiles because this will cause the price of rice to drop and lead to more corruption. This will have to be carried out with careful consideration, evaluation and inspection. The NCPO will support any efforts to inspect the rice stock if requested. Those who committed illegal actions will be prosecuted. From what I have learnt today, the price of rice per ton has increased slightly. I think it is better that we control the quantity of rice in the market and maintain the market price than if we were to flood the market with rice in stock and make the price drop. We have to be very careful. Everything has to be fair and transparent.

Concerning the Board of Investment, this is the responsibility of the economic working group. The board has to be established as soon as possible. The approval process for projects will have to be more thorough. Emphasis will be placed upon projects concerning alternative energy sources, projects that will create more job opportunities to the people, and projects that will strengthen our country.

I want Thailand to have small, medium, and large size industries that can produce high technological components of high value. We need to be more self-reliant. It is important that we learn from foreign investors and encourage them to use local materials.

The approved budget for fiscal year 2014 will go ahead to ensure progress, reduce the suffering of the people, and reassure investors. However, there must be clear rules and regulations to make sure that national interests are not compromised. The budget for fiscal year 2015 is also being considered simultaneously. It is in the process of being evaluated by the Budget Bureau and the Office of the National Economics and Social Development Board. They will be responsible for controlling national budget spending from the start. Projects with similar objectives will be combined to ensure fairness and transparency. Projects concerning public utilities will be given priority, as well as those that will create jobs and stimulate the economy.

We have established a committee to oversee the financial issues. This committee will have the responsibility to inspect the financial operations of all ministries. Any problem will be reported to the head of NCPO to prevent any mistakes. We are very careful with the national budget in order to make sure that all actions are in accordance with the law, fair, and transparent. There must be no corruption like in the past. Please do not believe it when you hear that I have been ordered or coerced by some influential figure to approve some projects. I do not negotiate or make deals with anybody. We want to change the society, so we have to set an example. Please ask me or the NPCO if you have any enquiries.

Suggestions can be made through official and unofficial channels. We welcome all suggestions and we will consider which are beneficial and feasible or which can wait for later. I value all suggestions. We also look at suggestions from the press and social media. There are probably more than 10,000 suggestions that we are trying to process and this will take some time. We might not be able to do everything at once, so we will prioritize them.

Please be confident of our intentions. We put people's need first. Problems associated with the rice pledging scheme, agricultural productivity, taxation, and energy prices will be thoroughly checked in order to find the best solution. All solutions must be

based on reason and be fair. People tend to believe what we like, what we want to believe. But sometimes we must listen to the other side, or look at the whole picture. This is why I need to receive explanations and clarifications from all agencies in order for me to see the whole picture.

The issues of energy and state enterprises are complex and need to be considered carefully. They are also connected to other issues such as tax reduction and oil prices. Therefore we have to start by looking at the whole structure. This issue may be delayed for a while, but will continue as planned once the root problems have been located and tackled. If we reduce prices as requested without having resolved the fundamental problems, other problems will surely follow. We will have to carefully look at all aspects, including details of investors, their profit expectations, and most importantly the real benefits they bring to the Thai people.

I can assure you that the NCPO does not gain anything from this. We are here to resolve the problems, not to create more. I urge you all to be vigilant and help us stop all corruption through the use of law, and to avoid further conflict and confrontations when trying to solve our shared problems.

I understand it is very dangerous to use absolute power to resolve national economic and financial problems, especially in the long run. But the most important problems we are facing today concern energy, taxation, prices of goods, and unchecked creditor networks. All these must be dealt with as soon as possible, but with careful consideration. If we rush into things and create more problems later, we will be held accountable and criticized.

We will expedite the approval of various projects to ensure stimulate the market. Next week we will have a meeting to discuss projects which need executive approval at the ministerial level. Investments with high budgets and long-term contracts will

also be reviewed. All agreements must be legal, honourable, and accepted by the Thai people.

My intention is to create unity among Thai people. People should feel that they and their properties are protected; that they live in a just and moral society - a society that does not tolerate corruption.

As for the justice system, I think all agencies involved already know their duties and the scope of their powers. However, they have to be able to perform their duties without outside pressure and influence. In the past, this was not the case and people started to lose respect for the laws and the system. The NCPO has removed these external influences so it is time to regain people's trust and confidence.

I have touched on many issues involving many people. The curfew has been shortened, or lifted, in certain areas. We will continue to reduce the restrictions imposed by martial law as the situation improves.

Some media such as television and radio satellite stations have been known to cause and promote conflict. These are being investigated and will be closed if found to be the cause of the problems. Contracts and agreements will have to be reconsidered. I am asking for the cooperation from all media to stop promoting conflict and support us in our efforts to resolve national problems.

We have seized a large number of war-grade weapons during the past weeks. We are currently trying to locate and pinpoint the network of these weapons. We will continue this search through the information gathered and with investigations. These people were given the chance to turn themselves and their weapons in to the authorities. They have not, so now we are doing our duty. War weapons have been smuggled into Thailand through our borders. Military and police personnel can only

observe certain border areas while the smugglers keep changing their routes. I take full responsibility for this matter. We need to find new measures to support and enhance these military operations such as procuring modern equipment. But we have budget constraints. Therefore we need to enlist the help of the local people to keep a watchful eye over the border areas.

On the issue of social psychology, we should give focus to supporting programmes that enhance mindfulness, education and public service, while reducing large scale permanent structures/monuments that have no use. We need to build quality human resources before building large scale and unnecessary luxurious undertakings which do not meet the needs of the people. We need to be moderate. People already have to spend a lot of time and money in travelling to receive public service. I have already given instructions that the public should have unhindered access to public services through either the existing mechanisms or new systems.

On cultural issues. We should help to reinforce the values of “Being Thai”, national pride, and upholding the institution of the monarchy. These values should be included in the school curriculum by the Ministry of Education.

On tourism, we should ensure that tourists feel safe and secure. However foreign tourists should not have a perception that they could come to Thailand to commit illegal activities as often portrayed in the movies. I am ashamed when this is portrayed in foreign films. Everyone should join hands.

On religion, everyone is free to practice any religion, which is all under the patronage His Majesty the King. Every religion teaches people to do good, but there are some who are anti-religious and have ill intentions. The responsible agencies must look into the matter.

On the development of teachers and education system, we should resume courses on history, civil duties, and morality in the current curriculum. The purpose is to instill a sense of purpose, strengthen the physical and mental state, and reinforce thoughtfulness and social responsibility. We need to encourage our citizens to build a systemic way of thinking by not thinking only in the short term basis. Think for the long term with focused and rational thinking. People in society should have a sense of generosity, sharing, not a society of abusing and defaming each other.

Tourism is an important point because it generates substantial income for the service sector. We need to push this forward.

Everyone must cooperate with each other to build a more resilient society. I think the international community will understand. We need time to work things out. We have wasted a lot of time in quarrelling among each other. It should not happen again. NCPO will not argue with those holding different views, either from internal or external sources. Everyone has their own reasons. We need to talk and resolve problems constructively.

Regarding the legal procedures, everyone has been rushing me to accelerate the cases. All the cases have come back to NCPO, be they about appointments, and abolishing of rules and regulations. I fully understand your grievances and problems as well as your distrust. Please give me time to work things out. If we do things wrong now, the problem will arise in the future.

On the three-phase Roadmap, do not be concerned and try to understand that there may be some misinterpretations. I believe my message is already clear. But the more I say the more you try to find faults. This makes it difficult for me to explain. We need to be dedicated and make sacrifices to solve the prolonged problems which have existed in Thailand for more than nine years.

International confidence on the economy is on the rise. Well known institutions have confidence in our economic state. The stock market has risen with high volume of trade. These achievements could not have happened without the cooperation of everyone.

We must devote and dedicate ourselves for the Thai people. I refer to the civil servants and NCPO who need to make more sacrifices to make up for the time that was lost while you had to work under pressure and domination from divergent groups. The people have suffered for a long time. We will deliver as promised and bring back happiness to the Thai people.

The problem of the rice pledging scheme has eased. Do not worry about the release of the rice stockpile. The Budget will proceed as planned. Necessary measures that were put in place and may have affected tourism or human rights will be eased.

We now need to tackle other issues. We have sent out teams to engage with those groups with different views. The academics who are currently not in the country have said that they will cooperate with us. I do not want to impose restrictive laws on those who are considered to be symbols of the political landscape and democracy. But you should understand the current situation. After the situation has been resolved, you may continue to engage in your activities and posit political views but should refrain from creating conflict. Forgive us if we had offended anyone in our actions.

On creating understanding of the situation, it does not rest only on the state sector, military, police or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but depends on all sectors of society. We have sent documents both in Thai and English clarifying what we are doing and the progress made to the business community. They have an important role in conveying the message to the international business community.

Of high priority is in dealing with the issue of illegal gambling, especially betting on football. The responsible agencies must tackle these issues to prevent resulting family problems. Debts must be repaid. The NCPO has never said it is alright to default on debts, including informal debts. But they must be fair. We can facilitate compromises in debt payment. I do not encourage people to resort to taking out informal loans from loan sharks. We could better control loans which were taken out from formal institutions.

There are many other issues I would like to talk about but I shall find time to do so at a later date.

I appeal to the university students, human rights groups and activists to refrain from instigating abrasive protest movements. If these movements persist, we may pursue legal proceedings. To our younger generation, you should understand that the nation needs time to improve and heal. When come to a point when we cannot move forward, we have to pause and fix our problems and move forward with hard work.

This are the main areas I wanted to convey to you today.

Delays in taxation, SME reform, and other commercial processes are in the process of being improved. All the issues that have been proposed to me, I am aware of the obstacles thanks to the consultation with civil servants, the media, and the general public. We have been able to organize our priorities accordingly and will start to improve pending issues such as national income and national spending, in particular large-scale investments in infrastructure. What is most important is who benefits from these projects. It must be the general public and not just big industry. We will need to improve our handling of social issues such public utilities, air pollution and waste disposal. All these measures will come to strengthen Thailand for the future.

Therefore let us come together to reform our country. I urge you all to join together and take the country forward and rebuild our great nation. I urge all sectors to support the NCPO and the civil servants on this country, in a spirit of bipartisan cooperation.

There have been gestures of holding 3 fingers in protest – that is fine. I have no conflict with you. But perhaps it would more appropriate if you can do this within your homes rather than in public. But how about if we all raise 5 fingers instead – 2 for the country, and the other 3 to signify religion, monarchy and the people. Raising 3 fingers is copying foreign films, but we should be proud of own identity. We can all live together in peace regardless of our differences.

All major reforms take time, but we can all work together to make this process quicker. Thank you all for giving your precious time to listen to me. I am doing my best to ease tensions during this time. I assure that we are not a threat to you or society. Those who have not committed any crimes have nothing to fear, because our aim is to bring back righteousness to all people. The judicial process will determine that in the end. Once again, thank you very much and ask for your cooperation and continued support. I believe that all Thai people understand my intentions.

Thank you very much.