

**Eco-Forum Global Annual Conference,
Guiyang, 11 July 2014**

Statement by

**H.E. Professor Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai
Chairman of the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council (APRC)
Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of
Thailand**

On

“A Green Silk Road”

Your Excellency Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of Malta,
Your Excellency Mr. Ham Lini, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic
of Vanuatu,
Your Excellency Mr. Dai Bingguo, Former State Councilor of China,
Your Excellency Mr. Kevin Michael Rudd, Former Prime Minister of
Australia,
Your Excellency Mr. Chen Min'Er, the Governor of Guizhou
Province,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been almost exactly 2 years since world leaders and over 40,000 participants attended the Rio+20 summit on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, that was successfully organised by Ambassador Sha Zukang.

Since then, sustainable development seems to have somewhat fallen off the world's radar screen, replaced by old and new geopolitical concerns and even by the current football World Cup being staged in Brazil. The world seems, regrettably, to have moved on.

It is gratifying, therefore, that international fora such as the Guiyang Eco-Forum Global Annual Conference is keeping the momentum alive and the focus on sustainable development, as through the Guiyang Consensus of 2013. I very much, therefore, appreciate the opportunity to be here at the 2014 annual conference.

The issues and challenges raised in the Rio+20 outcome document entitled "The Future We Want" are still very much with us, and still need more than ever before to be fully addressed, including through incorporation into the post-2015 UN development agenda.

Because of the combination of financial crises, social instability, and environmental degradation, perhaps for the first time in the world's history, large percentages of the young are increasingly less optimistic

about the future than their parents, and perceive lesser opportunities for themselves. Their horizons are being narrowed. We need new sources not only of energy, but of hope and optimism.

As former Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway stated in her report to the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. We do not have much time to waste, the next generation is growing up very fast. The present and immediate past generations have been using up resources at an unsustainable rate. The Global Footprint Network, for example, estimates that it will require one and a half Earths to sustain present consumption levels and use of natural resources.

A Green Silk Road can provide a new symbolism that can concretize the recommendations of the Rio+20 summit and give them new vigour. The ancient Silk Road connected the civilizations of East Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. It was not only a trading route, but a conduit for the exchange of ideas and technologies. Combined with a maritime Silk Road running through the seas and oceans of South-East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa to Europe, a revitalized Silk Road can bring not only more than half the world's population closer together, but also open up new opportunities for trade and investment. In such a framework, making it a Green Silk Road can offer additional opportunities to harness the potential of a green economy that can result in improved human well-being and social equity, balanced economic growth and new jobs, while significantly reducing environmental risks.

The city of Guiyang and Guizhou Province aspire to be green centres of development. They can certainly do so as part of a Green Silk Road economic belt. The revived Silk Road must be

comprehensive. The ancient Silk Road was never the one long road of popular imagination. It was a network of routes and trails. The modern Silk Road must also be a collection of networks, encompassing also the maritime routes. As Premier Li Keqiang said at the Boao Forum a few months ago, "E-Tai E-Ru" -- one belt, one road.

A revived comprehensive Silk Road has great economic potential. Making it a Green Silk Road, both on land and sea, will provide it with even more importance and meaning, in all the three pillars of sustainable development, namely the economic, social and environmental.

As the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report has stated, the concept of green economy does not replace sustainable development; but there is a growing recognition that achieving sustainability rests on getting the economy right. Decades of creating new wealth through a "brown economy" model based on fossil fuels have not substantially addressed social marginalisation, income gaps, environmental pollution and resource depletion.

In the words of a recent World Economic Forum report on the state of the world economy, we now have the opportunity to Re-think, Re-design and Re-build. The Green Silk Road concept will give us this opportunity in concrete and tangible form.

Renewable energy is already helping China complete its economic transformation and achieve energy security. Hydropower, nuclear power, biomass, solar energy, wind energy, and other renewable sources will increasingly comprise larger percentages of China's energy supplies. The vast expanse and reach of a Green Silk Road will provide ample opportunities to further construct and harness these renewable sources of energy.

President Xi Jinping has stated on many occasions that a revived Silk Road should not be only a transport link between end-of-the-line

destinations, but along its entire network there should be created an economic belt where new trade, industrial, and job opportunities are provided. A Green Silk Road can reinforce the economic belt with new industries, green agricultural and industrial products, markets for such products, and new job opportunities in new growth industries. In short, a Green Silk Road can form the backbone of China's eco-civilization.

There will of course be adjustment costs and job losses as inefficient energy sources, industries, modes of transportation, and production processes are phased out. But these can be offset through proper management and planning, and newer opportunities. The market for green products has already exceeded 1.76 trillion US dollars and by 2020, according to UN estimates, it will double in value. Investments into sustainable energy since 2005 have been growing by more than 50% a year to roughly 250 billion US dollars in 2011.

In addition to the economic dynamics, however, a successful transition to a green economy will require popular participation and involvement, especially at local community level so that everyone will have ownership of the process of change, a stake in its success, and thus provide the cross-over to a green economy model with sustainability.

Oriental wisdom will also be required when dealing with large numbers of people imbued with old traditions. It is an appeal to those traditions that will ease the transition to a green economy. In the East, in Asia, Oriental Wisdom can be found in many religions and ways of life. It is the wisdom of training the heart and mind to be conscious and mindful at all times of the consequences of one's actions. As the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote: "Every action of our lives touches a chord that vibrates in eternity."

Buddhist philosophy stresses the Middle Path or moderation in all things as a discipline of life. The Buddhist approach is reflected in H.M. the King of Thailand's philosophy of sufficiency economy which

stresses the sustainable use of available resources, moderation and reasonableness in acquisitions, sharing of benefits, and ensuring through savings and storage against market, cyclical or weather fluctuations. This approach has been recognized by the United Nations, which awarded H.M. the King the first Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award.

Carefully managed, there is still enough resources on Earth to meet basic needs. However, as Mahatma Gandhi observed: "The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed." Excessive greed has to be tempered. Buddhism teaches that a person has to understand when enough is enough. I will be expanding more on these themes up at the Fanjing Mountain Ecological Civilization and Buddhist Culture Forum in Tongren tomorrow. I am pleased to note that the Forum in Tongren is part and parcel of the Guiyang Eco-Forum annual conference.

Moderation mindfulness and a wise use of available resources are needed if a green economy and eco-civilization are to be able to provide solutions to the world's sustainable development problems. As Confucius had written: "He who will not economize will have to agonize."

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current path of development in all parts of the world is reaching a dead end. The world is already facing a lack of food and clean water, environmental pollution and urban overpopulation, growing greenhouse emissions and negative climate change impacts. A new road ahead is needed. A vision was set out at Rio+20 in "The Future We Want" outcome document. We need to keep the momentum of implementation of that vision strong and vibrant. Ideals such as eco-

civilization can reinforce the vision. Projects such as the Green Silk Road can help bring it to fruition. Use of Oriental Wisdom can ensure sustainability.

All said and done, it is not only about the future we want, but about a future that ought to be, a future that the next generations deserve, a green future that they have a right to expect.
