



## BALI PROCESS GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS FORUM

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### Written Statement

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*Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,*

I have always believed that once you share your knowledge, it becomes another's.

It is a simple and profound idea I encourage all of us to keep in mind as we convene at this Bali Process Government and Business Forum—an important platform enabling public and private sector leaders across the Indo-Pacific region to learn from each other's experiences in our shared fight to eradicate human trafficking, forced labor, modern slavery and the worst forms of child labor.

So, share your knowledge widely with all those willing to listen; and soak up as many lessons from others as you can. Let us transform our individual weaknesses into a unified strength and course for collective action.

Circumstance demands this from each of us privileged to participate in this process; authentic and clear collaboration is more urgent than ever as the forum firmly establishes the AAA Recommendations as a pathway for action to achieve Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals and eliminate the aforementioned transnational crimes currently afflicting so many people throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Thai Union is particularly supportive of Pillar Two of the AAA Recommendations calling upon governments to strengthen, implement and enforce policies and legislation to encourage ethical recruitment practices, improve transparency across supply chains, and provide support and redress mechanisms for victims.

In line with our SeaChange® sustainability strategy, Thai Union has worked to implement ethical policies and business practices, address risks in our global supply chain, and engage and share best practices with other businesses, partners and governments.



Thai Union's supply chains comply with labor regulations, as well as our Business Ethics and Labor Code of Conduct and Vessel Code of Conduct which cover the recruitment and treatment of all workers. The codes outline protocols on employee welfare, benefits, wages, age protections, the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, and non-negotiable frameworks for health and safety. Further, the Vessel Code of Conduct reflects the unique set of working conditions on fishing vessels that necessitate special consideration. Our suppliers must sign and adhere to these, establishing a baseline for expected behavior across the entire supply chain.

And as a company with a global workforce that welcomes legal economic migrants, Thai Union understands it is imperative that the potential for abuse and extortion of legal economic migrants is addressed.

In Thailand, as in many other countries, not only are migrant workers susceptible to discrimination, but they can be coerced into paying high recruitment fees on the way from their home country to secure a job. This means migrants seeking lawful employment might find themselves deeply indebted before arriving on the job.

Debt bondage has no place in our operations.

Thai Union has eliminated recruitment fees for all workers in our factories and processing plants, effective for all future recruitment of workers both from within Thailand and overseas. The elimination of recruitment fees follows Thai Union's continued development of an ethical migrant worker recruitment policy. And we are appreciative of the Royal Thai Government following this with regulatory efforts to eliminate the use of illegal labor brokers in Thailand, along with proactively working with Myanmar on safe recruitment issues through a memorandum of understanding.

In fact, Thailand has made a number of advances on human rights which should be commended.

Recent regulation requiring bank accounts and electronic payment transfers for migrant workers in the nation's fishing industry promotes human rights and safeguards workers through greater transparency and fairness.

We know this is effective because Thai Union transitioned workers across our global operations to electronic payments two years ago—including 100 percent of our workforce in Thailand. I can share from our experience that digital payments not only promote inclusive finance but also empower women with more control over family finances. This in turn increases their personal security and economic empowerment.

Thailand's Department of Fisheries was also incredibly supportive of an innovative digital traceability pilot project Thai Union implemented in 2017, which utilized mobile applications and



satellite connectivity on Thai fishing vessels. The results demonstrated true electronic end-to-end traceability and supply chain management. Importantly, for human rights, the pilot also brought with it the ability for workers on vessels to use a chat application to communicate with loved ones back on shore or raise the flag with authorities in the event of a problem.

Indicative of how significant connectivity at sea is, Thailand recently announced a provision in new regulation mandating Thai vessel owners operating outside of national waters must now provide a satellite communication system and device onboard for workers at sea.

Thai Union is obviously supportive of Thailand's efforts to more formally protect workers in the fisheries sector. Further, it should be noted, Thailand has a symbiotic relationship with the economic migrants who comprise a portion of our communities—we rely on them as much as they rely upon us. I encourage the Royal Thai Government, and others in the Indo-Pacific region, to take further steps to ensure migration is safe and legal, and human trafficking is eliminated.

For example, in line with Pillar 2 of the AAA Recommendations, more substantive regulatory steps are required to address unethical agents and brokers who find willing partners in unscrupulous businesses, meaning some workers continue to be exposed to abusive and exploitative practices in their search for legal employment and better lives. Without a strong governmental and intergovernmental regulatory framework, businesses alone cannot make economic migration safe for all willing take the journey.

Looking ahead, I believe Thailand has the potential be a leader on the human rights agenda because compassion for life is at the core of the character of the country. And Thai Union is eager to collaborate and help the Royal Thai Government successfully implement and guarantee greater protections. Meaningful, collective action is needed to ensure the slaveries that stain some modern-day supply chains are abolished.

It is time we all demand liberty, equality and security for everyone, so that no one is sentenced to an existence of oppression, servitude or other exploitation. The poor—the most vulnerable among us—cannot afford to subsidize the lives of the rich at the expense of their basic human rights.

It is incumbent upon all of us, particularly the governments and businesses involved in the Bali Process, to lead in this fight. We do this, in part, through genuine political will, multi-party collaboration, and resolute, uncompromising determination.

If we work together, we can create the future we all envision, for every man, woman and child; a future where no one profits off another's misery; and a future where no one is suppressed by the scourge of slavery.

Thank you.