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Press Release

European Union and Member States act in solidarity to bring 7,000 EU citizens stranded in Thailand back home

Close to 7,000 European citizens stranded in Thailand due to the COVID-19 crisis have returned home since late March on repatriation flights organised by the European Union and its Member States. The majority of these flights was supported by the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), an instrument designed to enhance the protection of EU citizens in crisis situations. They were part of the coordinated EU response to the unprecedented public health crisis triggered by the COVID-19 outbreak and demonstrated EU solidarity in times of great need.

So far, a total of 17 repatriation flights under UCPM have taken off from Bangkok and Phuket international airports. Each flight was organised by embassies of EU Member States in Thailand, namely the Czech Republic, France, Germany, and Lithuania. In addition, the embassies of France, Italy and Poland also organised flights bilaterally, which were open to European Union citizens from other Member States and contributed to the common repatriation effort.

Upon the conclusion of the first round of repatriation flights on 10 April, EU Ambassador H.E. Pirkka Tapiola said: "We have been able to work together in a spirit of true European solidarity for the benefit of our citizens. I am glad that we could help so many of them to return safely home."

European Union citizens remain stranded across the globe after airlines cancelled flights and countries closed their borders in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. As of 10 April, the UCPM has facilitated the repatriation of more than 30,000 people to Europe from all over the world.

Set up in 2001, the UCPM provides EU Member States and participating countries financial and equipment support for consular operations of an unprecedented magnitude and complexity, especially during major disasters and humanitarian crises. EU co-financing can cover up to 75 per cent of the cost of repatriation flights.

The Delegation of the European Union to Thailand provided coordination support to ensure smooth operations, including requesting permissions from relevant national authorities to facilitate repatriation efforts, informing Member States of available repatriation flights, flight schedules, and available seats for EU citizens, and alerting Member States, participating countries and other European partners to available commercial flights.

During the consular operations in Bangkok on 3-10 April, staff of the Delegation of European Union to Thailand were present at Suvarnabhumi Airport to assist European Union citizens and support Member State embassies on the spot.

For more information on the European Union's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, visit https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response_en and <https://europa.eu/!HB33Fw>

To download photos and videos: <https://bit.ly/UCPMFlights13Apr>

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