Statement delivered by

H.E. Mr. Virachai Plasai,
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at the General Debate of the First Committee
(2nd Meeting of the First Committee),
Seventy-second Session of the United Nations General Assembly,

New York,
2 October 2017
Mr. Chairperson,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), comprising Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Viet Nam and my own country, Thailand.

2. At the outset, ASEAN warmly congratulates you and members of the Bureau, on your election as Chair and Bureau of the First Committee of this 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly. We assure you of our support in advancing the important work of this committee. We wish also to recognize the Under Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for their tireless and consistent efforts in advancing the disarmament agenda at the United Nations, particularly in this past year.

Mr. Chairperson,

3. ASEAN reaffirms our commitment to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. ASEAN’s collective efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation ultimately and strongly support the goal of sustaining and maintaining a world that is peaceful and prosperous, for the benefit of our peoples.

On nuclear weapons,

4. ASEAN shares the desire and aspiration of a world free of nuclear weapons. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorised, or intentional nuclear weapon detonations remains, exposing humanity and the environment to their catastrophic effects. Therefore, we are convinced that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use and continue to welcome all efforts leading to this end.

SEANWFZ and NPT

5. This belief underpins ASEAN’s commitment to preserving its region as a nuclear weapon-free zone as enshrined in the Bangkok Treaty establishing the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). It also underpins our commitment to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to which all members of ASEAN are Parties. As we approach the 20th anniversary of the entry-into-force of the Bangkok Treaty this year, ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty, and continues to stress the importance of Treaty’s full and effective implementation. ASEAN has agreed to extend the Plan of Action to implement the SEANWFZ Treaty for the period of 2018-2022. Moreover, we reaffirm our commitment to the principles and objectives of the NPT, which has been and will remain the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We look forward to continuing the work of the NPT Preparatory Committee which will meet again in Geneva and New York in 2018 and 2019, in preparation for the 2020 Review Conference.
Mr. Chairperson,

**TPNW**
6. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted on 7 July 2017 by the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards their Total Elimination. Along with SEANWFZ and other nuclear weapon free zone Treaties, the TPNW constitutes a vital step towards global nuclear disarmament and complements the existing non-proliferation and global nuclear weapons related instruments. The Treaty would also make significant contribution towards the shared goal of making our region and the world free of nuclear weapons. The signatures of Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Viet Nam and Thailand as well as Thailand’s immediate ratification of the Treaty are significant steps towards an early entry-into-force of this historic legal instrument.

**CTBT**
7. ASEAN also stresses the significance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). While welcoming the recent ratification of the Treaty by Myanmar and Swaziland, ASEAN urges Annex 2 States whose signature and ratification are required for the entry-into-force of the Treaty, to complete their signature and ratification as soon as possible.

**Korean Peninsula**
8. We continue to express grave concern over the escalation of tensions in the Korean Peninsula. This concern extends in particular, to the most recent nuclear test conducted by the DPRK on 3 September 2017 as well as its previous nuclear and ballistic missile tests. We reiterate ASEAN’s support for the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner as well as for the resumption of dialogue towards establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula.

**Peaceful use of Nuclear Energy**
9. At the same time, ASEAN reaffirms the inalienable right of every State to the peaceful use of nuclear technology for its economic and social development. We look forward to formalizing the partnership between the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy (ASEANTOM) and the IAEA to promote greater cooperation on issues related to nuclear safety, security and safeguards, including capacity building. As such, we welcome the Philippines’ hosting of the upcoming 4th ASEANTOM Meeting in December 2017 to further discuss this matter.

Mr. Chairperson,

On other weapons of mass destructions,

**CWC and BWC**
10. We recognize the threat and danger of the existence and use of chemical, biological and radiological weapons and call for universal adherence to applicable international legal instruments prohibiting these. We welcome in particular, the
progress made in eliminating chemical weapons stockpiles since the entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention 20 years ago in 1997.

UNSCR 1540

11. ASEAN also emphasizes the importance of full and effective implementation of the non-proliferation regimes, including Security Council Resolution 1540. Here, greater coherence and cooperation is needed between States on intelligence sharing, capacity-building and assistance. Furthermore, the industries, academia and civil society have an important contribution to make to realising an effective non-proliferation regime.

On conventional weapons,

12. ASEAN recognises the legitimate right and authority of sovereign nations to use conventional weapons to maintain internal security and to defend territorial integrity. At the same time, the international community must recognize the growing illicit proliferation of conventional weapons which hampers economic and social progress and threatens peace and security.

13. For ASEAN, the implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons is therefore key and we look forward to taking stock of progress made in implementing the Programme of Action during the French Presidency of the Third Review Conference in 2018. We also take good note of the discussions at the 3rd Conference of State Parties on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and at the 7th meeting of State Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions earlier in September.

Mr. Chairperson,

14. ASEAN looks forward to the upcoming 16th Meeting of the State Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. We have a contribution to make in the form of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre headquartered in Phnom Penh in addressing the humanitarian aspect of unexploded ordinance and explosive remnants of war.

15. At the regional level, ASEAN also continues to address issues related to conventional weapons through various frameworks including the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, the annual meeting of ASEAN Police Chiefs, the ASEAN Forensic Science Institute and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

Mr. Chairperson,

On information and communications technology,

16. ASEAN continues to work closely to foster closer cooperation at a regional level to enhance the capacity of ASEAN to address challenges to cybersecurity. We have taken concrete steps to enhance cybersecurity, in the areas of cybersecurity incident response, computer emergency response team (CERT) policy and coordination, and
capacity building. Most recently, the second ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity was convened in September 2017. ASEAN Member States expressed support for the development of basic, operational and voluntary norms of behaviour to guide the use of ICTs in ASEAN in a responsible manner, which would take reference from the norms set out in the 2015 Report of the UN Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunication in the Context of International Security (GGE).

Mr. Chairperson,

17. Two-thousand and seventeen (2017) was a progressive year for disarmament. The agreed outcome from the open-ended working group on the 4th SSOD and a working group of the UNDC demonstrate that it is possible to achieve progress in disarmament today. We recognize that States have legitimate rights to ensure their own security, but this should not be at the expense of the collective security of all States. In this regard, ASEAN recognizes the value of multilaterism in instituting a rules-based approach to norms and as tool for building trust.

18. In this spirit, we look forward to working with all stakeholders during this year’s First Committee. ASEAN also calls on all Member States to continue to lend their support to the draft biennial resolution on the “Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty” to be tabled by ASEAN at this Committee.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

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