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Statement

by

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on behalf of the ASEAN Member States

in the General Debate of the First Committee

61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly

New York

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Madam Chair,

1. I have the privilege to take the floor on behalf of the Association of South East Asian Nations: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and my own country, Myanmar.
2. ASEAN congratulates you on your election as the Chairperson of the First Committee. Our felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

Madam Chair,

3. We are meeting at a time of heightened disappointment and concern on the lack of progress in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The disappointing outcome of the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament are setbacks we suffered in the past year. It is imperative that we draw lessons from our failures and move forward.

High-Level Debate of the Security Council

Madam Chair,

4. In light of the daunting challenges we face due to deep-rooted animosities in some regions of the world that are compounded by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the growing threat of terrorism, the international community must join hands.
5. ASEAN welcomes the High-level debate of the Security Council on closer cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security, held on 20 September 2006.

Resolutions on Nuclear Disarmament

Madam Chair,

6. ASEAN countries reaffirm our support for the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996 that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. ASEAN countries intend to co-sponsor the resolution, tabled every year by Malaysia, reaffirming this important ruling.
7. Likewise, ASEAN countries intend to co-sponsor the resolution initiated by Myanmar, calling upon the nuclear weapon States to cease immediately the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. The resolution also calls for the convening of an international conference on nuclear

disarmament in all its aspects at an early date to identify and deal with concrete measures of nuclear disarmament.

8. It is our earnest hope that both these resolutions will continue to enjoy widespread support in the Committee.

Nuclear Disarmament and Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Madam Chair,

9. ASEAN countries have consistently underscored the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We would like to reiterate our call on the nuclear weapon States to make further efforts towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons.
10. In this regard, we welcome the Final Declaration of the Fourth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT held in New York in September 2005. We also welcome the Joint Ministerial Statement on the CTBT, issued in New York recently.
11. This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the Treaty's opening for signature. The treaty now enjoys near universal support. It has been signed by 176 States and ratified by 135 States. We welcome the ratification of the treaty by Viet Nam in March this year. It is our hope that the required ratification of 10 more countries for its entry into force will follow soon.

Madam Chair,

12. We are deeply disappointed that the 2005 NPT Review Conference held in New York in 2005 was unable to adopt a final document due to deep divisions between several State Parties. It is imperative that the 2010 Review Conference of the NPT does not suffer the same fate. The preparatory process, scheduled to start next year, will be crucial in laying the ground-work for the Review Conference. ASEAN urges all UN Member States to work towards a consensus to meet the common threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons.
13. We emphasize the importance of the need for full and non-selective implementation of the NPT. We wish to reiterate our view that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the threat or use of nuclear weapons. We renew our call for the full and effective implementation of the practical steps set out in the 2000 Final Document. In this connection, we are convinced that there exists an urgent need for the nuclear weapon States to take concrete measures to fulfill their obligations under the NPT.

Missiles Proliferation

Madam Chair,

14. ASEAN shares the view that there is an urgent need for a comprehensive approach towards missiles proliferation.
15. ASEAN considers that the entry into force of the 2002 Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions between the Russian Federation and the United States of America is an important step towards reducing strategic nuclear weapons.
16. We continue to believe that the concerns related to missile proliferation are best addressed through agreements that are multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory.

Chemical and Biological Weapons

Madam Chair,

17. Chemical and biological weapons also pose a growing threat.
18. We are encouraged to note that 180 States representing 98 per cent of the global population have joined the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), making it near universal. We invite all States that have not yet signed or ratified the Convention to do so as soon as possible.
19. We also call on States that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) as early as possible. We look forward to a successful outcome of the upcoming Sixth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, to be held in Geneva in November 2006.

Conventional Weapons

Madam Chair,

20. The ASEAN countries remain deeply concerned over the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world. We recognize the need to establish and maintain control over private ownership of small arms. We call on States, in particular major producing States, to ensure that the supply of small arms and light weapons is limited only to Governments or to entities duly authorized by Governments and to implement legal restrictions preventing the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. We encourage all initiatives by States to mobilize resources and expertise as well as to provide assistance to strengthen the full implementation of the UN Programme of Action to

Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

21. We are disappointed at the inability of the UN Conference to Review the Progress made in the Implementation of the Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in June, to agree on a Final Document.
22. We take note that the Ottawa Convention on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personal Mines and on Their Destruction has been ratified and acceded to by 151 countries.

SSOD IV

Madam Chair,

23. ASEAN reiterates our support for the convening of the Fourth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to Disarmament. We reiterate our deep concern over the lack of progress in the Disarmament Commission on the agenda and objectives. Steps leading to the convening of the Fourth Special Session with the participation of all Member States of the United Nations to review and assess the implementation of SSOD I, should be taken expeditiously.

Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones

Madam Chair,

24. ASEAN has put forward initiatives that have significantly contributed to peace and security in the region. One of which is the establishment of the South East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). The accession of nuclear weapons states to the treaty will further strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, thereby enhancing regional peace and security.
25. We believe that nuclear weapon-free zones created by the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba as well as Mongolia's nuclear weapon-free status contribute to strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.
26. We welcome the signing of the Treaty on a nuclear weapon-free zone in Central Asia in Semipalatinsk on 8 September by 5 Central Asian countries.

Conference on Disarmament

Madam Chair,

27. The importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiation forum on disarmament cannot be overemphasized. We are therefore deeply disappointed by the continuing impasse in the CD and note with regret its inability to adopt its programme of work for 2006. We also regret that this year the Conference was not able to submit its substantive report to the First Committee.
28. It is our hope that the States concerned will demonstrate their commitment to the process of disarmament and exercise the political will to overcome this deadlock.

Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament

Madam Chair,

29. We wish to take this opportunity to express, once again, our appreciation to the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and Caribbean and Africa for their contribution towards international peace and security. Regional seminars and fora, organized by those Centres, effectively contribute to the progress of ongoing security and disarmament process in respective regions.
30. We appreciate and fully support the substantial contribution of the centres in raising awareness of disarmament issues.

Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II)

Madam Chair,

31. We recall the signing of the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II) at the 9th ASEAN Summit held in Bali, Indonesia in 2003, which decided to establish an ASEAN Community comprising three pillars, namely, political and security cooperation, economic cooperation and socio-cultural cooperation in line with the ASEAN Vision 2020, as a Community of South East Asian Nations, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies.
32. We recall also the adoption by the ASEAN leaders of the Vientiane Action Programme, the ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Plan of Action; the signing of the ASEAN Framework Agreement for the Integration of Priority Sectors; and the progress made in the implementation of programmes and projects

building up to the realization of the ASEAN Community as enshrined in the Bali Concord II.

ASEAN Regional Forum process and confidence building measures

Madam Chair,

33. The ASEAN countries continue to attach special importance to confidence building measures among ARF participants.
34. At the 13th ARF in July this year, Bangladesh became the 26th participating country. We are confident that Bangladesh's participation will contribute to enhancing political stability and security in the region.
35. The ARF activities have contributed to political stability, security and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia

Madam Chair,

36. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia is an instrument of peace, security and cooperation in inter-state relations. To date, ten countries outside ASEAN have acceded to the Treaty. These accessions testify to the continued relevance of the Treaty in contributing to regional peace, security and stability. In this context, we welcome the accession of Australia to the Treaty on 10 December 2005. We also welcome France's decision to accede to the Treaty. Timor-Leste and the EU have also indicated their intention to accede to the Treaty. It is our hope that other external partners will do so in the near future so as to create a favourable environment conducive to development in the region. This would not only benefit ASEAN but all its partners as well.

Conclusion

Madam Chair,

37. It is ASEAN's hope that the First Committee will be able to successfully hold substantive deliberations on the issues on our agenda and turn small steps into larger strides. Let us work together to restore confidence in this committee and other disarmament fora. In this spirit of cooperation we look forward to a fruitful session.

Thank you.