



MYANMAR

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Statement
by
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Ambassador, Representative of the Union of Myanmar

on behalf of the ASEAN Member States

at the General Debate
of
the First Committee

of
the 63rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly

(New York, 7 October 2008)

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour and privilege to take the floor on behalf of the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, Myanmar.

2. At the outset, I wish to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your unanimous election as Chairman of the First Committee. We pay tribute also to the other members of the Bureau. I assure you of the fullest cooperation and support of the ASEAN delegations.

Mr. Chairman,

3. ASEAN places high priority on nuclear disarmament in the maintenance of international peace and security and stress their concern at the threat to humanity posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use. Several initiatives have been taken by ASEAN in this regard.

4. The ASEAN countries reaffirm their support for the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice, in an advisory opinion of 8 July 1996, that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. In this regard, the ASEAN countries continue to support, and intend to co-sponsor, the draft resolution, tabled every year by Malaysia, reaffirming the importance of that ruling.

5. For a number of years, the ASEAN countries have co-sponsored the yearly draft resolution, initiated by Myanmar. The resolution urges the nuclear-weapon States to cease immediately the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems. It also urges the nuclear-weapon States, as an immediate measure, to de-alert and de-activate immediately their nuclear weapons and to take other concrete measures to further reduce the operational status of their nuclear weapon systems. It also calls for the convening of an international conference on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects at an early date to identify and to deal with concrete measures of nuclear disarmament.

6. A resolution on Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone was for the first time tabled and adopted by the General Assembly last year as resolution 62/31. The biennial resolution was sponsored by all ASEAN countries. The resolution encourages nuclear-weapon States and States parties to the Treaty to continue work constructively with a view to ensuring the early accession of the nuclear-weapon States to the Protocol to the Treaty.

7. These draft resolutions manifest ASEAN members' commitment to the cause of disarmament. This year, Malaysia and Myanmar with the support of ASEAN and other co-sponsors, will re-introduce them. It is our ardent hope that the draft resolutions will enjoy broad support and increased sponsorship.

Mr. Chairman,

8. We emphasize the importance of the full and non-selective implementation of the three pillars of the NPT regime i.e: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and welcome the positive and substantive outcome of the 2000 Review Conference. The ASEAN countries recall the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to pursue negotiation in good faith, particularly on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, to which all States Parties are committed under Article VI of the Treaty. We reiterate our view that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We therefore call once again for the full and effective implementation of the 13 practical steps set out in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. In this connection, we reaffirm our conviction that there exists an urgent need for the nuclear-weapon States to take concrete measures to fulfill their obligations under the NPT.

9. We regret that the 2005 NPT Review Conference, held in New York in May, did not achieve any substantive result. In view of this, it is imperative that the preparatory process for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, leads to a substantive outcome. ASEAN reaffirms its position on this subject and urges all United Nations Member States to work towards a consensus to address the common threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We urge all the parties concerned to demonstrate their political will to overcome their differences and work for concerted action on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

10. The ASEAN countries have consistently stressed the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). We reiterate our call to the nuclear-weapon States to make further efforts towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

11. We welcome the Final Declaration of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, held in Vienna in September 2007, which called on those states that had not done so to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay. The Treaty now enjoys near universal support. To date, 179 countries have signed the treaty and more than 80% of these have ratified it. We wish to urge all States, particularly the remaining States whose ratification is required for entry into force, to ratify the Treaty. In this regard, we took note of the Joint Ministerial Statement on the CTBT issued in New York on 24 September 2008.

Mr. Chairman,

12. We continue to believe that the concerns related to missile proliferation are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements. We will work together with Member States to contribute to the United Nations endeavour to address the issue of missiles in all its aspects by identifying areas where consensus can be reached.

13. Chemical and biological weapons also pose a serious threat to mankind. As the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has a vital role in countering the challenge posed by those weapons, ASEAN is encouraged to note that 184 states, representing 98 per cent

of the global population, have acceded to the Convention. ASEAN invites all States that have not yet signed or ratified it to do so as soon as possible. We also call on States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction as soon as possible.

14. The ASEAN countries remain deeply concerned by the illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions. 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 to Governments, or entities duly authorized by Governments, and to implement legal restrictions preventing the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons with non-State actors.

15. We reiterate our call on all states to support the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and welcome the final outcome document of the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

16. We take note that Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) has been ratified, and acceded to, by 156 countries.

Mr. Chairman,

17. ASEAN took initiatives that have significantly contributed to peace and security in the region. Among them was the establishment of the South-East Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone (SEANWFZ). ASEAN encourages the Nuclear-Weapon States to accede to the protocol to SEANWFZ as soon as possible.

18. The accession of nuclear-weapon States to the Treaty establishing the zone will further strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, thereby enhancing regional peace and security. We believe that the nuclear-weapon-free zones created by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Peñindaba, and Semipalatinsk as well as Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, contribute to strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

19. The importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiation forum on disarmament cannot be overemphasized. While the CD was able to conduct important thematic debates on all items on the agenda, it is regrettable that the CD could not yet reach consensus on a programme of work. It is our hope that the States concerned will demonstrate their commitment to the process of disarmament, and exercise political will to overcome that deadlock.

Mr. Chairman,

20. ASEAN has been making important contributions to regional peace and security. We recall the signing of the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II at the Ninth ASEAN Summit, held in Bali, Indonesia, in 2003, which decided to establish an ASEAN Community comprising three pillars: political and security cooperation, economic cooperation and socio-cultural cooperation. That is in line with ASEAN Vision 2020, which envisages ASEAN as a community of nations bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies.

21. We also recall 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, as well as 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.

22. The ASEAN countries continue to attach special importance to confidence-building measures among participants in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The activities of the Forum have contributed to political stability, security and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

23. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia is an instrument of peace, security and cooperation in inter-State relations. To date, 13 countries outside ASEAN have acceded to it. Those accessions testify to the continued relevance of the Treaty in contributing to regional peace, security and stability. In this context, we welcome the Letter of Intent by Turkey to accede to the TAC. It is our hope that other external partners will do so in the near future.

24. In conclusion, we once again renew our commitment to multilateralism as an important means of pursuing and achieving our common objectives in the field of disarmament, and our determination to further promote multilateralism in that respect. It is now more urgent than ever for us, the international community, to strive for international peace and security and to redouble our efforts and live up to our commitments to the goal of creating a nuclear-weapon-free world. We, the ASEAN countries, once again reaffirm our determination to work cooperatively to achieve those goals as a matter of utmost priority.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.