Statement
by
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Ambassador/Permanent Representative
of the Union of Myanmar
on behalf of the ASEAN Member States

in the General Debate of the First Committee
of the 65th Session of the United Nations
General Assembly

(New York, 6 October 2010)
Statement by H.E. U Wunna Maung Lwin, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the Union of Myanmar on behalf of the ASEAN Member States at the General Debate of the First Committee of the 65th Session of the United Nations

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the privilege and honour to take the floor on behalf of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) namely: 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 would like to congratulate you on your assumption as the Chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that your vast experience and diplomatic skills will bring our deliberations to a successful conclusion. Our appreciations also go to the other members of the Bureau. I assure you of our full cooperation and support in implementing your important task ahead of us.

Mr. Chairman,

3. ASEAN increasingly plays a pivotal role, with its continuous development, strategic geographical position and peace-oriented values in the region, in the maintenance of peace and stability in Southeast Asia and in the Asia-Pacific. We believe that it will contribute to international peace and security. We firmly support and actively participate in all efforts to achieve the objectives of general and complete disarmament. We pursue the policy of intensifying the cooperation and coordination both at the regional and international levels to effectively address the challenges of our time.

4. At the 16th ASEAN Summit held in Hanoi, Viet Nam from 8 to 9 April 2010, the Heads of State/Government of ASEAN Member States noted with satisfaction the significant progress achieved in the implementation of the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Blueprint which envisages the three key characteristics: a Rules-based Community of shared values and norms; a Cohesive, Peaceful, Stable and Resilient Region with shared responsibility for comprehensive security; and a Dynamic and Outward-looking Region in an increasingly integrated and interdependent world.

5. Among the existing tools and mechanisms made available to implement the APSC, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) is the key code of conduct governing inter-state relations in the region. In this regard, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in their Joint Communique of 43rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting held from 19 to 20 July 2010 in Hanoi, Vietnam, welcomed the accession of Canada and Turkey to the TAC as a strong signal of their commitment to strengthening cooperation with ASEAN and to peace and security of the region.

Nuclear Disarmament and Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Chairman,

6. Nuclear disarmament remains the highest priority on disarmament agenda of ASEAN member states. As enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, one of the purposes of ASEAN is to preserve Southeast Asia as a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and free of all other weapons of mass destruction.
7. In this connection, ASEAN welcomes the signing of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America designed to achieve further deep cuts in their strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. ASEAN also welcomes the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and calls for the full implementation of its Action Plan.

8. We express our sincere appreciations and thanks for the very important contribution made by the Philippines in its capacity as President of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

9. ASEAN reafirms the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a core instrument that prohibit all nuclear testing on earth contributing to stop the modernization of existing nuclear weapons, and to prevent the development of new nuclear warheads and the delivery systems. While welcoming the positive decisions by nuclear-weapon States, we reiterate our call on all States particularly to those whose ratification is needed for its entry into force to sign and ratify it at an early date. In this connection, we commend the intention to ratify the CTBT by the United States and Indonesia and call on all countries still outside of the Treaty to join the Treaty.

Resolutions on Nuclear disarmament

Mr. Chairman,

10. ASEAN Member States are making their contributions for nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in the work of the First Committee. We are convinced that the continuing existence of nuclear weapons poses a threat to humanity and that their use would have catastrophic consequences for all lives on earth, therefore, the only defense against a nuclear catastrophe is the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The International Court of Justice, on 8 July 1996, unanimously concluded 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.

To this objective, Malaysia will bring this important obligation to our attention again this year by a draft resolution entitled “Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons.”

11. Myanmar will be tabling a draft resolution on “Nuclear disarmament.” We believe that mere existence of nuclear weapons combined with lack of legal regimes on the complete prohibition of such weapons poses the greatest threat to the survival of mankind. The draft resolution reflects interim measures and steps to be taken by nuclear-weapon States as well as various multilateral approaches leading to total elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time. These measures and approaches are comprehensive, pragmatic and can be implemented if there is genuine political will to make the world free of nuclear weapons.

12. These resolutions are the reflection of ASEAN views on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and we hope that we will enjoy the support of international community in taking action on the draft resolutions in the First Committee.
Nuclear Weapon Free Zones

Mr. Chairman,

13. ASEAN strongly believes that the nuclear-weapon-free zones constituted by the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba, and Semipalatinsk as well as the Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status contribute significantly to strengthening global nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regimes. This was underscored at the Second Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Conference in New York, convened just prior to the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Furthermore, at the Meeting of the SEANWFZ Commission in July 2010, ASEAN re-emphasized the importance of enhanced interaction and coordination amongst nuclear-weapons-free zones. ASEAN also underscores the importance of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones where they do not exist, especially in the Middle East.

14. We further emphasize the important decision made by the 43rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting to preserve Southeast Asia as a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and the SEANWFZ Treaty and free from weapons of mass destruction. The ASEAN nations have agreed to exert greater efforts to ensure that various programmes and activities indicated in the Plan of Action toward the strengthening of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) be carried out fully and effectively. In the same vein, we continue to engage with the Nuclear Weapon States to encourage them to accede to the SEANWFZ Protocol as soon as possible.

Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

Mr. Chairman,

15. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BTWC) constitute a major role in combating weapons of mass destruction. We urge remaining states to join the treaties at their earliest opportunity.

Conventional Weapons

16. ASEAN upholds the UN Charter and international law, and reaffirms the right of each ASEAN Member State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion and coercion. ASEAN further notes international agreements articulating the right of all states to territorial integrity.

17. ASEAN recognizes the urgent need to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, and to promote full implementation of 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. ASEAN reiterates its call on states and organizations in a position to do so to further strengthen cooperation and assistance to states in building national capacity for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action. In this regards, we take note of the report of the Fourth 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 held in New York from 14 to 18 June 2010.

18. The ASEAN Member States believe that any possible negotiations on the issues of unregulated trade in small arms light weapons and or conventional weapons have to fairly take into account the
interests and needs of all regions and groups. The ASEAN Member States will thus work to promote outcomes that are in line with the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Charter.

19. ASEAN recognizes the adverse humanitarian impact caused by the use of cluster munitions. In this regard, we take note the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 1 August 2010 and welcome the offer of the Lao PDR to host the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Vientiane from 9 to 12 November 2010.

Conference on Disarmament and other disarmament machinery

Mr. Chairman,

20. ASEAN Member States are greatly dismayed the setbacks and stalemates for many years in the work of the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). We therefore welcome the High Level Meeting on Revitalizing the Work of the Conference on Disarmament and Taking Forward Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations held in New York on 24 September, 2010. We reaffirm the important role of the Conference on Disarmament as the primary multilateral negotiating body on Disarmament.

21. ASEAN Member States share the disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to undertake substantive work on its agenda. In this regard, we call on the members of the Conference on Disarmament to adopt and implement a balanced and comprehensive programme of work on the basis of its agenda and dealing with, inter alia, the core issues, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, and by taking into consideration the security concerns of all states.

22. ASEAN Member States reaffirm the importance of the principles of transparency and inclusiveness in the disarmament and non-proliferation negotiation process. We are of the view that time has come for the Conference on Disarmament to consider the question of expansion of its membership since its last expansion took place in 1999 and welcome the call for the appointment of a Special Coordinator on Expansion of the Membership of the Conference in near future.

Mr. Chairman,

23. In concluding, I would like to inform you that ASEAN has accomplished great achievements in moving towards the ASEAN Community by 2015 which is politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible. We believe that stable and prosperous ASEAN will contribute to regional and international peace and security.

Thank you.

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