STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS BY MR JOSEPH TEO, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE FIRST COMMITTEE THEMATIC DEBATE ON OUTER SPACE (DISARMAMENT ASPECTS)

Mr. Chairman,

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, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, Singapore.

2 ASEAN recognises that outer space is a domain relevant to a broad spectrum of human activities, including navigation, communications and commerce. ASEAN is convinced that space technology and its applications provide indispensable tools for viable long-term solutions for many of the development challenges, as well as contributing to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr Chairman,

3 ASEAN would like to make several points in relation to the discussion on outer space.

4 First, ASEAN recognises that exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes is for the benefit for all humanity. The prevention of an arms race in outer space is of vital importance. In this regard, we should build consensus on norms that encourage the peaceful use of space as a global commons for the benefit of all States. Deeper international collaboration is required, and ASEAN supports the efforts to strengthen the governance framework of outer space. A possible avenue for addressing this issue is through an appropriate multilateral framework on rules of behaviour in outer space. ASEAN notes with appreciation the report
of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures (TCBMs) in Outer Space Activities, and reaffirms the importance of TCBMs in fostering mutual trust and reducing the risks of miscommunication.

5 Second, ASEAN welcomes activities and dialogue to deepen understanding on issues pertaining to space security. In particular, ASEAN would like to highlight the contributions made by the series of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Space Security Workshops. ASEAN expresses appreciation for the most recent workshop co-hosted by Laos, China, Russia and the US in Beijing in November 2015. ASEAN also looks forward to the fourth workshop which will be co-hosted by Singapore and the US, and held in Singapore from 24 to 25 October 2016. This will again be an opportunity to explore critical issues including space security threats and hazards, transparency and confidence-building measures for enhancing space security and areas for practical international cooperation in a comprehensive and balanced manner.

6 Third, ASEAN expresses appreciation for opportunities provided for capacity-building in the fields of space science and technology, particularly in Member States with fledging space capabilities. On this note, ASEAN welcomes the announcement by the United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) on 27 September 2016 regarding the first ever dedicated United Nations space mission targeted at providing developing countries the opportunity to develop and fly microgravity payloads for an extended duration in orbit. ASEAN also welcomes the recent opening of the second round of applications for the KiboCUBE initiative, a capacity-building initiative launched by UNOOSA and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency that offers developing countries the opportunity to develop cube satellites from the International Space Station.

Mr Chairman,

7 Fourth, ASEAN recognises that the steadily increasing interest in space brings along a series of challenges that have to be tackled expeditiously. In particular, ASEAN reiterates our concern regarding the issue of space debris. These space objects pose a serious risk for communications and all nations, peoples, and industries that rely heavily on their use. ASEAN encourage States which have not yet done so to consider voluntary
implementation of the Space Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. ASEAN also urges the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to continue discussion on measures to mitigate space debris.

8 Pragmatic cooperation among all parties is required to ensure that space remains secure and sustainable. The Joint Ad Hoc meeting of the First and Fourth Committee during the 70th Session of the General Assembly to discuss possible challenges to space security and sustainability was a welcome development. ASEAN welcomes the proposal for a second joint Ad Hoc meeting at the 72nd Session of the General Assembly, which will serve to enhance synergy between the First and Fourth Committees. ASEAN stands ready to play its part, and to further contribute to the discussion on outer space, a domain which affects the future of all humanity.

9 I thank you, Mr Chairman.