



MALAYSIA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS



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**STATEMENT BY
H.E. AMBASSADOR HUSSEIN HANIFF
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA**

**ON BEHALF OF
THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN)**

**COMPRISING BRUNEI DARUSSALAM, THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA,
THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA, LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC,
MALAYSIA, THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR,
THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE,
THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND AND THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM**

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 69 (B): HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE
APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN
RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS**

AND

**AGENDA ITEM 69 (C): HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL
RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES**

OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE

68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 30 OCTOBER 2013

Mr. Chairman,

It gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of the 10 Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country Malaysia on this important issue.

2. ASEAN is appreciative of the Committee's continuing work in the promotion and protection of human rights and wishes to reaffirm ASEAN's full support in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

3. During the 26th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Singapore, in July 1993, the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN welcomed the international consensus achieved during the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, held in June 1993. ASEAN Member States also stated in the Joint Communiqué their collective views on human rights, which remain valid and relevant today.

4. The Joint Communiqué reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as set out in the Vienna Declaration. The Declaration stressed that human rights are interrelated and indivisible, comprising civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which are of equal importance. These rights should be addressed in a balanced and integrated manner, protected and promoted with due regard for specific cultural, social, economic and political circumstances. The promotion and protection of human rights should not be politicized.

5. The work of the international community in the promotion and protection of human rights should take into account principles of respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of states. Freedom, progress and national stability are promoted by a balance between the rights of the individual and those of the community, through which many individual rights are realized, as provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Mr. Chairman,

6. To fulfill its commitment in the promotion and protection of human rights, ASEAN established the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in October 2009. We welcome the ongoing efforts of the AICHR in implementing its initiatives and programmes, including the implementation of the Priority Programmes and Activities of AICHR 2013 and the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) that was adopted on 11 November 2012.

7. A Special Meeting of the AICHR was convened from 14 to 16 August 2013 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, which focused on the implementation of the AICHR's Priority Programmes and Activities for 2013. Several concept papers for upcoming workshops and trainings were adopted; among them were the AICHR Advanced Training Program on Human Rights: Training of the Trainers to be conducted from 16 to 20 November 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand, the AICHR Regional Workshop on Human Rights-based Approach to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children to be held from 27 to 28 November 2013 in Manila, Philippines as well as the AICHR Regional Workshop on the Promotion of Maternal Health and Reduction of Maternal Mortality: Meeting the UN Millennium Development Goal 5 in the Context of the ASEAN Community of which will also be held in Manila, Philippines from 29 to 30 November 2013.

Mr. Chairman,

8. Since the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN has been emphasizing the need to have a human rights document tailored to the norms and values of its Member States. The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration is a clear expression of our commitment to the international community in addressing issues concerning human rights.

9. The AHRD emulates the essence of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and several international human rights instruments, yet it is also uniquely ASEAN. It is not useful to compare the Declaration with the UDHR or human rights mechanisms in other regions, as each region is unique. Instead, the Declaration should be seen as complementing existing human rights instruments, with value added features that take into consideration Asian values and norms which are applicable to ASEAN Member States. Ultimately, what is important is that the AHRD will lead to improved livelihoods for our people. ASEAN is committed to the implementation of the AHRD in this regard. The ability of ASEAN, through the AICHR, to produce the Declaration demonstrates not only its strong commitment to human rights but also its power to unite countries and peoples of rich diversity characterizing the nature of the ASEAN Charter.

10. To ensure the effective implementation of the Declaration among ASEAN Member States, the “ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and the Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the AHRD, and its Translations” book was launched in August 2013, in conjunction with the Celebration of the 46th ASEAN Day, which was themed “Contributing to the ASEAN Community Building through the Implementation of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD)”. The book compiles the translations of the two documents into the national languages of the ASEAN Member States. The event was followed by a panel discussion on the AHRD and the ASEAN community building by 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

11. We are proud to highlight the progress of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), which was established in April 2010. The ACWC seeks to promote the wellbeing, development, empowerment and participation of women and children in the ASEAN Community building process. An ACWC Expert Meeting was held in July 2013 to develop a study framework on women’s economic rights to land and property ownership in ASEAN Member States. The study will map out and analyze the situations of women’s rights to land and property in ASEAN Member States. Two components that will be covered comprehensively are the provision of rights in the existing laws, and prohibitions and obstacles arising from the customary laws. The study will compile best practices and strategies of ASEAN Member States to address women’s deprivation in their entitlements, such as access to capital and productive resources, as well as access to and ownership of land. The result of it is expected to provide input to ASEAN Member States in strengthening their poverty alleviation programmes for women and children. The study was planned in the ACWC Work Plan 2012-2016 to contribute to the promotion of women’s economic rights particularly to land and property.

12. On partnership, the ASEAN Secretariat, in collaboration with UN Women, conducted an Intensive Learning Workshop on Women’s Human Rights for the Regional and National Secretariats to ASEAN Human Rights’ Bodies in Bali, Indonesia, from 18 to 21 March 2013. The learning workshop aimed for the work and function of Regional

and National Secretariats to be more reflective of and promoting women's human rights perspectives and strategies. More specifically, this workshop provided a platform for discussion and update on the latest developments in the international normative framework on gender equality and women's human rights.

13. Through interactive discussions, participants were able to have a deeper understanding of key concepts and perspectives relevant to the analysis of women's situations and laws and legal systems and human rights of women; identified specific strategies for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights of women as well as increased skills to apply human rights of women's concepts and perspectives through the work of ASEAN, AICHR and other ASEAN bodies.

Mr. Chairman,

14. Realizing the importance of gender equality, "Gender Mainstreaming Training" was held in February 2013 at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia to enhance the knowledge on the elements of gender mainstreaming approaches and strategies in support of the "One Billion Rising" global campaign to end violence against women. The training was also convened to assist ASEAN Secretariat staff members in gaining practical skills on measuring organizational capacities to address gender issues and mainstream gender perspective in their respective lines of work. We believe that gender mainstreaming is not only essential for securing human rights and social justice for women and men, incorporating gender perspective in different areas of development will also ensure the effective achievement of the three pillars of economic, political-security and socio-cultural community of ASEAN.

Mr. Chairman,

15. To conclude, as ASEAN reaffirms its commitment in intensifying efforts towards realizing the ASEAN Community 2015, it is crucial to ensure an effective promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which will enable an ASEAN Community that is strong, inclusive and its people empowered. Mainstreaming human rights in the implementation of the respective blueprints of ASEAN will help to ensure a strengthened caring society, which seeks peace and harmony. While we seek to set the agenda for the promotion and protection of human rights in the region, there is a need to take into account the non-confrontational and constructive manners of engagement in view of regional particularities, variegated cultures, religions and traditions. There is also a need to further articulate ASEAN's vision of a community that is not only politically cohesive, economically integrated, socially responsible but also truly people-oriented, people centered, and rules-based.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.