



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC TO THE UNITED NATIONS**



**Statement on behalf of the Member States of the
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

Delivered by

**Mr. Daovy VONGXAY,
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Lao People's
Democratic Republic to the United Nations**

**At the Thematic Discussion on Cluster 2: Other Weapons of Mass
Destruction (WMD)
of the First Committee, Seventy-Fifth Session of the United Nations
General Assembly**

New York, 23 October 2020

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Chairman,

2. ASEAN welcomes the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, particularly "ensuring respect for norms against chemical and biological weapons concerns the interests of all humanity". Given the fact that other weapons of mass destruction, if detonated intentionally or by accident, can cause massive loss of life, damage to property and great harm to the environment, ASEAN member States condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of such weapons by any party under any circumstances, as this constitutes a serious violation of international law. Therefore, ASEAN reiterates the need for the international community to fully and effectively implement all treaties concerning weapons of mass destruction.
3. Having recognized the threats and dangers of the existence and use of chemical, biological and radiological weapons, ASEAN continues to call for universal adherence to applicable international legal instruments prohibiting these weapons. In this regard, ASEAN welcomes the progress in eliminating chemical weapons stockpiles under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons (CWC) while emphasizing the importance of full and effective implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) and other Weapons of Mass Destruction related treaties.
4. All ASEAN Member States are parties to the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention. In this regard, ASEAN invites those States that have not yet signed or ratified the Convention to do so as soon as possible. ASEAN recognizes that the Convention remains one of the most successful instruments of disarmament that completely prohibits an entire category of WMD, providing for a verification system and promoting the use of chemicals for peaceful purposes in accordance with the international law. ASEAN Member States take our international obligations seriously in this regard. With the current COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating consequences to socio-economic development and human life, ASEAN stresses the importance of biological security and safety.

5. ASEAN strongly believes that the international community should increase its efforts to strengthen international cooperation in order to eliminate chemical weapons and enhance international support to help all victims suffering from the chemical weapons. In this connection, ASEAN commends the OPCW for its unwavering efforts to support the implementation the provisions of the CWC.

Mr. Chairman,

6. As ASEAN Member States are parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), we recognize that the BWC represents a critical component of the international legal framework related to WMD. In this connection, ASEAN calls for the resumption of multilateral negotiations to conclude a non-discriminatory legally binding Protocol, dealing with all Articles of the Convention, in a balanced and comprehensive manner to sustainably strengthen the Convention, including through verification measures. In addition, ASEAN reaffirms its support to the efforts of the international community to prevent terrorists and other non-state actors from acquiring such weapons of mass destruction and their means of distribution by enhancing cooperation in information sharing.

Mr. Chairman,

7. On regional cooperation, ASEAN is also committed to improving regional capacity to address chemical, biological and radiological threats. The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting approved the Network of ASEAN Chemical, Biological and Radiological Defence Experts in 2018 to strengthen cooperation against chemical, biological and radiological threats. Under the ambit of the Network, regional chemical, biological and radiological defence experts have gathered over the last two years to build networks as well as share information and best practices through visits and workshops. Practical cooperation in the ASEAN defence sector continues to make good progress since its inception in 2006. At the 13th Meeting held in Thailand on 11 July 2019, ASEAN Defense Ministers adopted and signed the Joint Declaration of the ASEAN Defence Ministers on Sustainable Security. This year, the ASEAN Defence Ministerial Meeting Three-Year Work Programme 2020-2022 and the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group Work Plans 2020-2023 to chart the future direction of practical defence cooperation in ASEAN and

share best practices and to make quick contact during chemical, biological and radiological crises, will be finalized and approved.

8. Furthermore, ASEAN acknowledges the defense sector's commitment and contribution to ASEAN's collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic as reflected in the Joint Statement by the ASEAN Defence Ministers on Defence Cooperation Against Disease Outbreaks issued at the ADMM Retreat in February 2020. In this regard, ASEAN welcomed the successful conduct of the ADMM COVID-19 Table-Top Exercise on 27 May 2020 under the ASEAN Center of Military Medicine (ACMM), and the Virtual Workshop on Promoting Scientific Cooperation to Manage Infectious Disease Outbreaks on 30 June 2020 under the Network of ASEAN Chemical, Biological and Radiological Defence Experts.
9. In addition, the Regional Secretariat of the EU CBRN Center of Excellence in Southeast Asia has been working to enhance the capacity of the ASEAN Member States in mitigating CBRN-related risks by ensuring cooperation and coordination in South-East Asia and supporting efforts to identify CBRN risk mitigation needs, develop National CBRN Action Plans and formulate and implement regional project proposals. As part of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Workshop on Raising Awareness and Promoting Cooperation on CBRN Risk Mitigation was held in Manila in 2018 for policy professionals, practitioners, security forces, and health experts. Building upon this work, the 27th ARF has also agreed to carry out the ARF Table Top Exercise (TTX) on Response Capabilities to CBRN Incidents, which has been postponed this year due to the pandemic, in inter-sessional 2020-2021.

Mr. Chairman

10. Let me conclude by reaffirming ASEAN's support for the work of the OPCW and the BWC's Implementation Support Unit and by stressing the importance of enhanced international support for States Parties in need of assistance to build national capacity for the implementation of treaties related to weapons of mass destruction in accordance with national and international law and the UN Charter.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman