



Malaysia

Permanent Mission to the United Nations



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**STATEMENT BY
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MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND 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 UNION OF MYANMAR,
THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE, THAILAND AND THE
SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM**

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 65: PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN
OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE**

66TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 12 OCTOBER 2011

Mr. Chairman,

It gives me great pleasure to speak on behalf of the ten Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN; namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Mr. Chairman,

2. ASEAN leaders realize and reaffirm that ensuring the rights of children is a common responsibility. ASEAN thus made a significant step in the commitment of children when ASEAN Member States signed the Declaration on the Commitments for Children in ASEAN in 2001 in Singapore. The declaration is a guiding principle for ASEAN Member Countries in enhancing the protection, development and survival for children in the ASEAN region. This particular declaration is the first document fully dedicated to ASEAN children in this Millennium. However, ASEAN's pledge to children goes a long way before this declaration was introduced.

3. In December 1993, ASEAN Member Countries signed the ASEAN Plan of Action for Children. The ASEAN Plan of Action for Children provides the framework for promoting regional cooperation for the survival, protection and development of the ASEAN Child. The Plan is an integral part of Member Countries' efforts in improving the lives of the peoples of the region. The Plan of Action addresses three priority areas of concern, which include child survival, child protection and child development.

4. The Declaration and Plan of Action are in line with the ASEAN Vision 2020, adopted by the 2nd ASEAN Informal Summit held in Kuala Lumpur in December 1997, envisioned ASEAN as a socially cohesive and caring ASEAN where hunger, malnutrition, deprivation and poverty are no longer basic problems, where strong families as the basic unit of society tend to their members particularly the children, youth, women and elderly.

5. Bearing that in mind, ASEAN has set the priority in promoting regional cooperation for the survival, development, protection and participation of ASEAN children, as an integral part of ASEAN's efforts to improve the lives of peoples in the region, and to intensify ASEAN's economic and social development cooperation so as to eradicate the scourges of poverty, hunger and homelessness, which have a far-reaching impact on children, in order to promote their welfare and well-being.

Mr. Chairman,

6. In order to become a sharing and caring community, the well-being, development, empowerment and participation of women and children must be promoted in the ASEAN Community building process which contribute to the realisation of the purposes of ASEAN as set out in the ASEAN Charter.

7. It is based on this realization that on 7 April 2010, the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) was inaugurated in Ha Noi in the lead-up towards the 16th ASEAN Summit. The establishment of the ACWC is to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and children in ASEAN. It will take into consideration the different historical, political socio-cultural, religious and economic context in the region and the balances between rights and responsibilities.

8. The functions of the ACWC are, among others, to promote the implementation of international instruments, ASEAN instruments and other instruments related to the rights of women and children and develop policies, programs and innovative strategies to promote and protect the rights of women and children to complement the building of the ASEAN Community. It would also promote public awareness and education of the rights of women and children in ASEAN.

9. ASEAN is proud to inform that in making the effort a globalised endeavor, the ACWC engages in serious dialogues on critical issues of gender equality and the rights of children in ASEAN with other global stakeholders, among others, the Committees on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as with UN agencies, notably UN Women, UNICEF, and UNODC on various issues concerning the rights of women and children. The initiative is not a redundancy, but is a complementary to the existing protocols.

Mr Chairman,

10. In enhancing regional and international cooperation with a view to complement national and international efforts on the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children, all ASEAN countries have given their mandate to the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children to develop policies, programmes, and innovative strategies to promote and protect the rights of women and children to complement the building of the ASEAN Community. In the thematic areas concerning children for example, the right to quality education, including Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), trafficking in children, adolescent physical and mental health, children living with and affected by HIV and AIDS, children affected by war or armed conflict and in situation of disasters, social impact of climate change on children, the right of children to participate in all affairs that affect them, are areas of serious contemplation.

Mr. Chairman,

11. ASEAN takes great pride in the progress made with regard to children's development in the region. In December 2008, the Senior Officials on Social Welfare and Development approved the children's proposal to establish a Children's Forum within the ASEAN structure. The First ASEAN Children's Forum (ACF) was successfully held in the Philippines in October 2010. This is seen as a significant venue for children's participation in the regional arena where child participation is institutionalized and considered to be the "regional voice" for children in the ASEAN.

12. The Forum was attended by 32 children accompanied by their mentors from ASEAN Member States. Of these 32 children aged between 13 to 20, there were 7 children with disabilities. The establishment of the Forum was a recommendation by ASEAN children that attended the First South East Asian Children's Conference in December 10-14, 2006 organized by the Philippines as host of the 13th ASEAN Summit. We believe that such forum is important to bridge communications between the government and the children in building a people-oriented ASEAN Community.

Mr. Chairman,

13. On the international front, all ASEAN Member States have ratified and are parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Mr. Chairman,

14. Early childhood is the most critical period in human development and that 85 per cent of the person's intellect, personality and social skills are developed in the first five years of the child's life. Children that have quality early childhood education will start on a better life trajectory. ASEAN strongly believes that the future our children inherit will be the result of the choices we make today.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.