



Malaysia

Permanent Mission to the United Nations



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**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HUSSEIN HANIFF,
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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, THAILAND AND THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM**

**ON AGENDA ITEM 66:
PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN**

**OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE
67TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

NEW YORK, 17 OCTOBER 2012

Mr. Chairman,

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

2. At the outset, ASEAN notes with appreciation the reports submitted under this agenda item which highlight among others, latest developments on the situation of indigenous children and children affected by armed conflict and violence. ASEAN believes that these reports provide a useful basis for the Committee to objectively reflect and assess efforts aimed at further promoting and protecting the rights of children.

Mr. Chairman,

3. ASEAN underscores the importance of advancement of vulnerable groups, such as children, as a crucial determinant of an inclusive, robust and sustainable ASEAN Community.

4. ASEAN's commitment to this agenda is reflected in the strategies and targets set out in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint of 2009 that serve to address the rights of vulnerable groups, including children.

5. Seeking to enhance coordination and accelerate efforts towards achieving the socio-cultural community goals, ASEAN had in 2010 developed a Strategic Framework and Plan of Action for Social Welfare, Family and Children for the period 2011 to 2015.

6. In essence, the Strategic Framework contains practical measures and plans of action aimed at building a people-oriented ASEAN. The Strategic Framework was formulated based on key ASEAN policy documents namely the 2010 Ha Noi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children; the 2004 Vientiane Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons Particularly Women and Children; the 2001 Singapore Declaration on the Commitments for Children in ASEAN; and the 1993 Resolution on the ASEAN Plan of Action on Children adopted in the Philippines.

Mr. Chairman,

7. ASEAN is keenly aware that while the region as a whole is making good progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, performance across countries however, remains uneven. With an estimated 195 million children under the age of 18, ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to continue prioritizing the welfare of its children who will be the future of the region's continued peace and prosperity.

8. To this end, the ASEAN Strategic Framework calls for the promotion of children's welfare by safeguarding their rights and ensuring their survival and full development; by protecting them from abuse, neglect, violence, discrimination and exploitation; and encouraging meaningful participation of children in society. To these ends, areas identified as requiring more effective national and regional responses include child protection, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, sanitation and hygiene, as well as education.

9. In line with the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report A/67/229 on creating environments that are conducive for children's wellbeing, ASEAN continues to see the promotion of children's rights as one of the critical components in achieving sustainable development.

10. ASEAN concurs with the recommendations underlined in the Secretary-General's reports on the need to include and invest in child protection within the national agenda. Recognizing that greater efforts are required to enhance the region's child protection systems, ASEAN Member States have been making progress in recalibrating their respective child protection systems. These efforts include establishing child protection policies, laws and regulations; developing models for diversion and restorative justice for children in conflict; and setting up mechanisms to protect child witnesses and victims of child abuse, exploitation and child trafficking.

Mr. Chairman,

11. On the issue of children and armed conflict, the ASEAN Strategic Framework also includes provisions to review the situation of children and families affected by armed conflict in member states.

12. The focus areas evaluated in these reviews include the impact of conflict on child and family welfare; child protection from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation; and access to social services.

13. The findings are expected to increase understanding on the needs of children and families affected by armed conflict, and provide a basis for strengthening laws, policies and services aimed at promoting and protecting the wellbeing of children and families affected by armed conflict.

14. With regard to violence against children, the Strategic Framework calls for the convening of regional inter-sectoral workshops to study the impact and cost of violence against children, and the effectiveness of multi-sectoral prevention strategies.

15. The objective of the workshop is to increase Member States' understanding of the issue of violence against children, and to inform policy and strategy development. The workshop further aims to guide Member States to clarify the national statistical parameters in order to support cost-effective social welfare systems for children and families by 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

16. Policy coherence, as well as implementation and monitoring at the regional level is undertaken by the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children or ACWC.

17. At the ACWC's fifth meeting in Jakarta, in July 2012, stakeholders came together to discuss concept papers of 12 projects and activities to be implemented in the period of 2012 and 2014.

18. Among others, planned projects include developing a regional network of social services agencies aimed at empowering child victims of violence; organizing programs on creating conducive environment for children to participate in decision-making processes; on non-violent approaches in disciplining children; setting performance standards on the ASEAN integrative child protection system, and on the service delivery for children with disabilities.

19. In support of multi-stakeholders cooperation, the Commission held dialogues with 39 national and regional civil society organizations with a view to seek inputs on the Commission's proposed draft declaration on Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children as well as shared their views on issues related to the rights of women and children.

Mr. Chairman,

20. ASEAN shares the concerns highlighted in the Secretary-General's reports on the need to address the vulnerability of children to emerging types of crime including transnational organized crimes and cybercrimes. In March 2012, some 80 representatives from law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies from the United Kingdom and four ASEAN countries, namely Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam met in Phnom Penh, Cambodia for the Third Annual United Kingdom-Southeast Asian Regional Child Protection Workshop to strengthen cooperation and exchange experience on child protection.

21. Focused on the issue of pedophiles including those operating through cyberspace, the two-day workshop was run by specialist trainers from the United Kingdom's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre aimed to provide a better understanding of child sexual exploitation issues, share best practices, strengthen the regional network of multi-agency contacts, and explore ways to better collaborate with other stakeholders.

Mr. Chairman,

22. In addition to safeguarding the safety of children, ASEAN remains committed to mainstreaming the participation of children in regional programs as part of the region's social development agenda. In this regard, the Second ASEAN Children's Forum was held in Singapore on 6 to 8 June 2012. The Forum provided a channel for children to express their views on issues affecting them and how these issues can be addressed by governments in partnership with children.

23. With its theme "LEAD", which stands for Learn, Express, Act and Dream, the Forum aimed at encouraging children to take ownership of issues that affected them and provided opportunities to enhance their skills in learning, expressing their views, taking action, and conveying their aspirations. The Forum also provided a regional-level platform to educate children on their rights as enshrined under the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and in allowing the children to explore and identify ways on how adults, organizations, and agencies can support the realization of children's rights.

24. Attended by thirty-six children from all ten ASEAN Member States and the People's Republic of China, the Forum concluded that the most vulnerable groups of children are those in poverty, those without access to education, those with intellectual and physical disabilities, as well as those adversely affected by natural disasters.

25. In view of such vulnerabilities, participants called on ASEAN governments to immediately act upon a four-pronged proposal, namely to provide food and clothing to poor families and disadvantaged children; to empower children by providing scholarships and further engaging children in forums; to increase children's awareness of their right to participate; and to provide more learning facilities in schools including information technology equipment.

Mr. Chairman,

26. In concluding, I wish to emphasize that ASEAN is keenly aware that there remain many challenges for vulnerable children in the region. Towards ensuring the continued promotion and protection of their rights and fundamental freedoms, ASEAN shall continue working towards an ASEAN Community that supports safe and healthy childhoods; a Community that offers abundant opportunities for learning and social growth towards nurturing competent citizens who would contribute to the region's continued peace, stability and prosperity.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.