STATEMENT BY
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ON BEHALF OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN)

AT THE FIRST COMMITTEE
OF THE 76TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FOR
COMBINED CLUSTERS 1 - 4

NEW YORK, 12 OCTOBER 2021
Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

2. ASEAN remains concerned with the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and the risks posed by their continued existence.

3. ASEAN believes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to guarantee against their use or threat of use.

4. ASEAN reaffirms its recognition of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

5. We call on all NPT States Parties to renew their commitments towards the full and effective implementation of the Treaty, particularly Article 6. We urge all parties to work in good faith towards the success of the 10th NPT Review Conference.

6. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force on 22 January 2021, provides that each State Party undertakes never under any circumstance to develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It is a historic agreement which contributes towards nuclear disarmament and complements other existing instruments.
7. With regard to CTBT, ASEAN calls on the Annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty to allow for its entry into force as soon as possible.

8. ASEAN reiterates its commitment to preserve Southeast Asia as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ or the Bangkok Treaty).

9. ASEAN stresses the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the Treaty on SEANWFZ (2018 – 2022). We reaffirm our commitment to continuously engage the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) and intensify the ongoing efforts of all parties to resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the SEANWFZ Treaty.

Mr. Chair,

10. On another realm, ASEAN maintains its unequivocal commitment to upholding the norms against the existence and use of chemical, biological and radiological weapons.

11. All ASEAN Member States recognize that the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) constitutes a critical component of the international legal framework related to WMD. ASEAN, therefore, reiterates its call 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.
12. ASEAN recognizes the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) as one of the most successful instruments of disarmament that completely prohibits an entire category of WMD. All ASEAN Member States strictly abide by our international obligations under the convention. In this regard, ASEAN invites those States that have not signed or ratified the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

13. 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 dialogue and cooperation.

Mr. Chair,

14. ASEAN recognizes access to outer space as an inalienable right of all States. We believe that the exploration and use of outer space should exclusively be for peaceful purposes only, which are in the collective interest of humanity. All activities in outer space must be conducted in accordance with international law and the principle of non-appropriation of outer space.

15. As it is incumbent upon all States to ensure that the use and exploration of outer space are exclusively for peaceful purposes, the General Assembly must play a vital role in fostering continued dialogue on current issues and challenges in this field.
16. ASEAN recognizes the significant progress made by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs in promoting international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space.

17. Moving forward, activities in outer space should not remain the exclusive preserve of a small group of States. ASEAN encourages the strengthening of capacity-building programmes, with particular emphasis on developing countries, to ensure that outer space is, both in principle and in practice, a common heritage of mankind which all States can avail themselves to.

Mr. Chair,

18. ASEAN is gravely concerned with illicit proliferation of conventional weapons throughout the world, which contributes to violence, perpetuates poverty, and undermines human welfare.

19. ASEAN reiterates that the implementation of relevant international agreements on conventional weapons should be in conformity with fundamental principles of the UN Charter and international law, with States bearing the primary role.

20. At the same time, ASEAN acknowledges that States have their sovereign rights to acquire and manage conventional inventory for self-defence as well as safeguarding national security.
21. In closing, ASEAN reaffirms its strong commitment to combating illicit trade of conventional weapons and calls upon all States to join hands to stop all illegal trading activities to ensure our collective security and continued development without disruption.

I thank you.