



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) BY MS DIANA LEE, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 138: IMPROVING THE FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, FIFTH COMMITTEE, 13 OCTOBER 2017

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

1 I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 10 Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on Agenda Item 138: Improving the Financial Situation of the United Nations. ASEAN aligns itself with the statement made by Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

2 ASEAN thanks Ms Jan Beagle, Under Secretary-General for Management, for her presentation last week. We also thank Ms Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas, Assistant Secretary-General and Controller, who delivered the updates today on behalf of the Under Secretary-General.

Mr Chairman,

3 ASEAN notes that the Organisation's financial indicators for 2017 for peacekeeping operations and the tribunals remain generally sound and positive. We are encouraged that as of 30 September 2017, 134 Member States have paid their assessed contributions for the regular budget in full, eight more than one year ago. We are also pleased that as of the same date, 32 Member States had paid all peacekeeping assessments in full; 106 Member States had paid their assessed contributions for the tribunals in full; and 31 Member States had paid all of their assessments in full.

4 At the same time, ASEAN is deeply concerned at the Under Secretary-General's report that regular budget cash has been exhausted and reserves are at low levels. We take note of her warning that severe cash problems may be experienced in the final months of 2017 unless sufficient contributions are received.

5 ASEAN expresses our solidarity with Member States who face genuine difficulties in paying their assessments. We highlight that there are also Member States who, despite their challenges at home, have endeavoured to meet their financial obligations to the United Nations. We commend them for this demonstrated

sense of responsibility and their efforts to match their words with actions.

6 However, ASEAN also notes that there are Member States who have the ability to pay their assessments but have not done so. We stress that failure to fulfil our legal and financial obligations to the United Nations in full, on time, and without preconditions compromises the effectiveness of the Organisation in implementing its mandates. The Under Secretary-General said in her statement of 6 October 2017 that "sound financial management necessitates adequate cash reserves so that the United Nations can meet its financial obligations in a timely fashion". We agree with this statement. To this end, ASEAN recalls that the Secretary-General has made proposals with regard to the Working Capital Fund in his reform proposals. We will study them carefully. We are of the view that regardless, this proposal should not detract from our basic responsibility to meet our legal and financial obligations to ensure the smooth and effective functioning of the Organisation. We look forward to having a discussion on this topic during our deliberations later in the Session.

7 On the part of the Secretariat, ASEAN welcomes the Secretary-General's commitment to meeting the United Nations' obligations to troop- and police-contributing countries. We congratulate the Secretariat in making significant reductions in the amounts owed. We urge the Secretariat to bring the amount owed to TCCs and PCCs down to zero at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr Chairman,

8 ASEAN notes other measures taken by the Secretariat to improve processes, including providing Member States with the option to receive assessment letters via email. In general, ASEAN supports innovative ideas to streamline processes. However, we are mystified as to why this spirit of innovation appears to extend to streamlining the Under Secretary-General's presentation to Member States. We understand and usually encourage efforts to maintain a positive tenor in this Committee. However, this should not be at the cost of transparency, particularly when the Organisation faces cash flow problems. Member States deserve to have a full, holistic, and honest picture of the financial health of the United Nations. We deserve to know how much, where, and why. The Secretariat should not shy away from presenting these facts, whether pleasant or not. Only then can we fully understand why the Organisation faces challenges in implementing its mandates, and why reform is necessary to help us achieve our common goals.

9 I thank you, Mr Chairman.

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