



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS BY MR. TERRENCE TEO, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 146: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, AT THE FIRST RESUMED SESSION OF THE 75TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, NEW YORK, 1 MARCH 2021

Thank you, Mr Chair.

1 I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 10 Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on agenda item 146: Human Resources Management. ASEAN aligns itself with the statement made by Guinea on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

2 ASEAN thanks Ms Martha Helena Lopez, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, and Mr Abdallah Bachar Bong, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing their respective reports.

Mr Chair,

3 Amidst the Secretary-General's ongoing reforms for the United Nations, it is imperative that the human resources management policies of the Organisation also evolve in tandem, so that it advances rather than hinders transformation efforts. The Organisation is ultimately defined by its people, so meaningful reform is only possible if human resources policies support these changes. Regrettably, the Fifth Committee was unable to reach satisfactory conclusions on key policy issues over the past sessions. We hope to achieve a successful resolution of the outstanding issues in this session. In this regard, allow me to make three points.

4 First, ASEAN strongly believes that the composition of the Organisation’s staff should accurately reflect the Organisation’s international character. This will enhance the diversity of views and capabilities, and improve the effectiveness of mandate delivery. While we commend the Secretariat’s efforts in producing the new Geographical Diversity Strategy, we reiterate that the principle of equitable geographical representation should not be undermined by broader concepts such as regional diversity. We also expect that the attainment of equitable geographical representation should receive a similar level of attention as gender parity in the UN, in particular at the senior levels.

5 Second, ASEAN urges the Secretary-General to take concrete steps to improve the recruitment and rejuvenation of UN staff, to address the ageing trend of the secretariat staff. In this regard, we commend efforts such as the online examination platform which enhances the accessibility to UN recruitment opportunities. These online platforms are all the more salient in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, more can be done to create equal opportunities for candidates from developing countries. For greater accountability, we request the Secretary-General to report tangible outcomes that show improvement in geographical representation to the General Assembly on a regular basis. These updates should also include analysis of the root causes and measures to tackle the un-representation and under-representation of developing countries.

6 Third, ASEAN believes that the consistent training and development of staff remains the cornerstone of any sustainable organisation. While we are cognisant of the UN’s ongoing liquidity challenges, we stress that expenditure in training should not be put off to achieve short term savings. This would only be detrimental to the UN’s ability to deliver on its mandates in the long term. In-house capacity should continue to be developed and strengthened where feasible. ASEAN urges the Secretary-General to not lose sight of this important aspect of human resources management, and to continue to invest in the necessary training and development for UN staff.

Mr Chair,

7 ASEAN looks forward to efforts by the Secretary-General to address these issues, and we stand ready to engage constructively with all delegations towards securing the best policies for the staff of the Organisation. Thank you.

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