



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) TO BE DELIVERED BY MR. ANTONIO M. LAGDAMEO, AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 134 ON ADDRESSING RACISM AND PROMOTING DIGNITY FOR ALL, AT THE MAIN PART OF THE 78th SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA), NEW YORK, USA, 16 NOVEMBER 2023, 10 AM

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on Agenda item 134, *Proposed Programme Budget for 2024: Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for all*.

ASEAN aligns itself with the statement of Cuba, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We thank the members of the secretariat, and the Advisory Committee for the Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), led by Mr. Abdallah Bachar Bong, for their respective reports.

Mr. Chair, racism and racial discrimination have no place in any organization. ASEAN rejects racism in all its forms and manifestations. We express support for the long-standing efforts to combat racism and racial discrimination in the United Nations at all levels. This is also a commitment to uphold *the principle of equal rights* enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a set of democratic principles and ideals we firmly uphold with honor and conviction.

We also welcome the Secretary General's refined proposal to strengthen the long-term effort of combating racism and racial discrimination within the United Nations, which includes the establishment of the Anti-Racism Office, within the Department for Management Strategy, Policy and compliance (DMSPC), to lead and coordinate a comprehensive effort to combat racism and racial discrimination in the secretariat, In line with this, ASEAN highlights the following points:

1. We understand that the imperative to address this issue and the work of the Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All, has been reinforced through extensive interactions of the Special Adviser on Addressing Racism in the workplace with staff at the UN headquarters and missions, including staff unions and relevant groups. We express the hope that efficient collaboration with pertinent UN system entities will continue to ensure a cohesive systemwide approach.
2. We hope that the implementation steering group will be comprised of officials from diverse regions to oversee the operationalization, execution and mainstreaming of

the strategic action plan, as well as provide guidance and substantive advice to the proposed Anti-Racism Office. We support the importance of an effective governance structure and trust that the implementation steering group will provide adequate oversight and ensure coherence and accountability in the implementation of anti-racism initiatives.

3. We also look forward to hearing updates on applicable Staff Regulations and Rules, including information on possible work or functions vis-à-vis those of other UN departments, offices and bodies, as well as on the scope and reporting lines in order to ensure the independence of the Anti-Racism Office and its effective mandate delivery. To strengthen its functions, we are of the view that the Office should receive adequate resources to support its administrative and other operations.
4. At the same time, we acknowledge the importance of having external and independent expertise to help address potential racism and biased conduct in the review of the organization's policies and practices.

Mr. Chair, we believe that the Secretariat can build an organization that is more racially inclusive, effective and efficient in carrying out its mandate.

Finally, ASEAN thanks the Department of Operational Support (DOS) for its work and contribution, including the work of its Human Resources Division, which made possible the review of recruitment processes to identify potential bias and the separations from the organization with pilot entities to better understand whether reasons for leaving the organization might relate to diversity, equity or inclusion issues. We also note the upgrades made on existing operational training through a multilingual and anti-discriminatory lens.

Mr. Chair, you can count on ASEAN's commitment to working with all delegations towards a constructive outcome on this important agenda item in a timely manner.

I, thank you.