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STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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

SIXTH COMMITTEE
AGENDA ITEM 83
THE RULE OF LAW AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

74TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 11 OCTOBER 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

ASEAN would like to thank the Secretary General for his report on "Strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities," contained in document A/74/139. The report highlights the important role the United Nations plays in the promotion of the rule of law at the national and international levels, including the UN support to its Member States as well as challenges the UN faces in strengthening its coordinating activities.

Importantly, the rule of law at the national and international levels is the cornerstone of friendly relations among nations, and the central basis of multilateral engagement and cooperation. With a view to promoting and strengthening multilateral cooperation into the future, ASEAN welcomes this year's debate focusing on "sharing best practices and ideas to promote the respect of States for international law."

Mr. Chairman,

Since its founding in 1967, ASEAN has continuously strived to build an inclusive, rules-based community governed by rule of law at all levels. As such, ASEAN is firmly committed to international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter, as they are indispensable foundations in our efforts to build a more peaceful, prosperous, and just world for all.

As a rules-based inter-governmental organization, ASEAN has long been committed to stability and security in the region. Important treaties, declarations and instruments have paved the way for our success, including the ASEAN Charter, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia of 1976, the Treaty on Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone of 1995, the Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea of 2002, the Declaration of the East Asia Summit on the Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations of 2011, and the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration of 2012 together with the Phnom Penh Statement on its adoption. Moreover, ASEAN Member States continue to work with China towards the early conclusion of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

The lessons learned from ASEAN's collective experience show that equally-shared respect for principles of sovereign equality of states, territorial integrity, and non-interference in domestic affairs strengthen our common bond, allowing Member States to work effectively with one another. More so, our shared respect for the rule of law at the national and international levels, allows for transparency, consistency, and predictability in our collective action as we build a strong ASEAN for the future.

As such, ASEAN is of the view that respect for rules-based architecture and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter, must be a globally-shared objective. In promoting respect for international law, it is important to avoid selectivity and double standards in the application of legal norms and principles. In the same light, monitoring mechanisms for multilateral treaties should be supported. These efforts would promote accountability and transparency in the implementation of international obligations.

Moreover, in promoting respect for international law, disputes must be settled peacefully in accordance with Chapter Six (VI) of the UN Charter. ASEAN Member States share several successful examples where disputes of one sort or another have been settled through negotiation, mediation, arbitration, or judicial settlement, among other means. Indeed, the ASEAN Charter embodies these fundamental principles, stipulating respect for peaceful settlement of disputes, democracy, good governance, and protection of human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

ASEAN strongly believes that in order to successfully promote respect for the rule of law at the national and international levels, national capacities must be strengthened. In this respect, we would like to emphasize the importance of providing technical assistance, knowledge and skills-based training, as well as development support to Member States. We welcome the work of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group and the Rule of Law Unit in this regard, and look to closer engagement in the future.

When the UN provides support and activities to strengthen the rule of law, it is important to avoid fragmentation. UN actors should not be working in silos. Open, engaged communication and coordination of efforts are central to our shared success. Moving towards a more comprehensive approach will promote consistency, enabling effective delivery of UN assistance, while allowing for effective partner cooperation with a view to improving rule of law programs at the national and international levels.

As such, ASEAN would like to underscore the importance of the United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law. The Programme serves a key purpose in promoting international law globally, while helping foster friendly relations among nations. Given the Programme's integral role in the international legal architecture, ASEAN calls for sustainable financing of the Programme with a view to broadening its reach.

Mr. Chairman,

The rule of law at the national and international levels is the driving force behind global socio-economic development, peace, justice and security for all. As we move forward in our deliberations on the resolution of this agenda item, it is ASEAN's hope that discussions will lead to fruitful and agreeable outcomes. We encourage all delegations to work constructively to find common agreement for a worthy subtopic to be discussed during next year's seventy-fifth anniversary session of the United Nations.

For its part, ASEAN will continue to fully engage with all its partners to promote and strengthen respect for the rule of law globally.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.