**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

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ASEAN-IPR– United Nations Workshop

“ASEAN Perspectives in Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution in the Region”

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Excellencies;

Distinguished Speakers and Participants;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today for the ASEAN-IPR – UN Workshop “ASEAN Perspectives in Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution in the Region.” On behalf of the ASEAN Secretariat and Secretary-General of ASEAN Dato Lim Jock Hoi, I would like to express our appreciations to the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation and the United Nations Department of Political Affairs for the initiative to bring together the best and brightest minds from various parts of the world to share experiences and insights on this important and ever evolving subject matter.

Let me begin by underlining that conflict, in the form of inter-state or cross-border conflict, and specifically the avoidance or prevention of such a conflict, has been at the heart of ASEAN. We may not use the same jargons or terminologies, but managing and resolving conflict are very much at the core of ASEAN’s interests.

In our parlance, the ASEAN’s aspiration is to build a peaceful and stable community. ASEAN also strives to be cohesive, responsive and relevant in addressing challenges to regional peace and security, as well as assuming a central role in shaping the evolving regional architecture.

Overall, the ASEAN Community envisions by ASEAN is a region that resolves differences and disputes by peaceful means. The emphasis here on the words: “peaceful means.” The approaches to achieve this would include but not limited to adopting peaceful dispute settlement mechanisms while strengthening confidence-building measures, promoting preventive diplomacy activities and conflict resolution initiatives.

In this context, the ASEAN political-security cooperation promotes ASEAN principles, shared values and norms as well as the principles of international law governing peaceful conduct among States. For this reason, ASEAN actively engages various partners and external parties to promote the principles of ASEAN.

With regard to the UN, ASEAN’s partnership with the UN dated back to the early 1970s. The long and fruitful partnership testifies that the UN is indeed a key partner of ASEAN.

One of the key features of the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership is to promote regional and international peace and security. In connection with this, the UN has contributed to activities within ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

Exchange of experiences and best practices in conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy has also intensified through the Track 1.5 ASEAN-UN Regional Dialogue (AURED) held since 2012. Different themes have been discussed under the AURED series. Most recently, the 4th in the series held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2017, focused on the role of women in the prevention of violent extremism. The 5th Dialogue is in the pipeline and scheduled to be organized in Vietnam in 2019.

The ASEAN-UN Plan of Action also encourages regular dialogues and specialized trainings, and collaboration with the ASEAN-IPR on confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy, peace-making, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding.

This Workshop is a tangible demonstration of collaboration and synergy between the two institutions. On the way forward, I would encourage both the ASEAN-IPR and the relevant UN’s counterparts to explore various other modalities to exchange knowledge and experiences. An example of this may include trainings for the ASEAN-IPR Secretariat on peace and reconciliation processes.

Let me conclude by saying that managing peace, which is the main business of ASEAN, and which is larger and encompassing than conflict management, is akin to a marathon without a finishing line. We must endure; we simply must sustain our efforts. For ASEAN, the ASEAN Community building is irreversible. Our only option is to move forward, necessitating us to brace ourselves and be prepared to anticipate and address all the challenges that may lead ahead.

I trust this Workshop would provide valuable lessons-learnt for all, and the sharing of experiences and best practices on managing peace, including conflict management, conflict resolution and reconciliation, will become a habit among the practitioners and institutions involved in the Workshop today, and thereby become a useful resource to widen our perspectives and enrich our skills on this area.

I wish you all a fruitful Workshop.

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