Introduction

Mr. Chairman,

1. On behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), I would like to congratulate and welcome Your Excellency __________ as the Chair of the High-Level Segment of the 62nd Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND).

2. ASEAN recognises the importance of the 62nd CND since this is also the year when the international community decides the way forward following the culmination of the current international drug plan. As such, ASEAN would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our continued support to the CND in its role as the principal policy-making organ of the United Nations on all matters of international drug control and as the governing body of the UNODC’s drug programme.

3. I now seek the Chair’s permission to deliver a statement on behalf of the ASEAN Member States consisting of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam during the 6th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters (AMMD) held in October 2018.
World Drug Problem

4. The World Drug Problem is a complex and continuous challenge that undermines the livelihood of communities and development of a nation. According to the World Drug Report 2018, in 2015 an estimated 450,000 deaths were attributable to drug use and of those deaths, 167,750 were directly associated with drug use disorders, mainly due to overdoses\(^1\).

5. Drug trafficking and abuse also pose a heavy burden on our society because of this strong relationship between drugs and crime. Some of it is caused by users committing crimes to pay for drugs to feed their addiction while others are due to the influence of drugs.

6. Every new or existing drug users represent a life being destroyed, and a family that is hurting. We strongly believe that drugs destroy lives and families and have no place in our societies. For this reason, ASEAN countries have maintained a zero-tolerance approach to drugs, and our leaders have consistently reaffirmed our shared commitment to a Drug-Free ASEAN vision.

Regional Drug Challenges

7. As we deal with current challenges, new ones have also emerged. As a larger percentage of the population in the ASEAN region has improved broadband and mobile access, the risks of online purchase of

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\(^1\)United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, World Drug Report 2018, pf. 7, booklet 1 & pg. 21 booklet 2
illicit and counterfeit drugs increase. The rapidly evolving New Psychoactive Substances have also started to proliferate in our region before we are able to schedule them under control. As ASEAN moves to better integrate our economies and communities, it creates the unintended effect of creating opportunities of illicit drug trade. Our challenges will be further compounded as a result.

8. In protecting our communities from new and existing drug threats, we are also mindful of drug-related challenges that are linked to other forms of organized crime, including money-laundering, corruption and human trafficking.

World Drug Policy and Moving Forward

9. At the center of the joint effort in addressing the world drug problem, ASEAN Member States strongly support and reaffirm the principal role of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as the main policy-making body of the United Nations for drug control matters. Through the CND-led process, we reaffirm our commitments to jointly address and counter the world drug problem in a comprehensive, balanced and integrated manner.

10. In light of this, ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to implement the provisions contained in the three political documents, namely the 2009 Political Declaration on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem, the 2014 Joint Ministerial Statement and the 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document, which are complementary and mutually reinforcing.
11. ASEAN affirms that the three international drug conventions constitute the cornerstone for world drug policy and acknowledges their continued relevance in meeting the challenges we are facing.

**ASEAN’s effort in tackling regional drug problem**

12. Despite the challenges and our diverse drug situations, ASEAN remains resolute in our shared commitment to counter the world drug problem. It is also because of this commitment that motivates ASEAN to adopt the theme of “Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs 2016-2025” for our new Work Plan three years ago. We are glad to announce that three years into the Work Plan, we have made some steady progress:

- Since 2015, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters was institutionalised under the ASEAN Charter to provide the political impetus and strategic guidance to regional efforts in combating the region’s drug problem.

- In 2017, ASEAN launched the ASEAN Cooperation Plan to Tackle Illicit Drug Production and Trafficking in the Golden Triangle 2017-2019. This Cooperation Plan is targeted at interdicting drug and precursors trafficking from the Golden Triangle into the ASEAN region.

13. To improve information sharing among member states, we have established the ASEAN Narcotics Cooperation Center or ASEAN-NARCO, and subsequently formed the ASEAN Drug Monitoring Network (ADMN). This network helps to facilitate the sharing of the latest
information on regional drug trends via a dedicated sharing platform. To date, ASEAN-NARCO has successfully published three annual ASEAN Drug Monitoring Reports, which detail the drug situation within ASEAN.

14. Operationally, ASEAN has also grown tighter. We now have several platforms for intelligence sharing, as well as for coordination of joint operations. The establishment of the ASEAN Airport Interdiction Task Force and the ASEAN Seaport Interdiction Task Force further improve the information exchange between enforcement agencies, thus making it more difficult for drugs to enter our borders for further distribution.

15. On the demand reduction front, we have built an ASEAN portal to share useful resources on preventive drug education while progressively scaling up treatment coverage to include evidence-based and community-based rehabilitation programmes. Our aim is to help drug users fully integrate into the society and lead a drug-free life.

16. ASEAN Member States are strengthening their existing capabilities to sustain Alternative Development programmes to prevent farmers from turning back to illicit crop cultivation and improve their quality of life. We have achieved some success in the reduction of opium poppy cultivation area in the region in 2017. Member States also engage in integrated area development, skills training and income-generating livelihood programmes for both rural and urban settings to cut both the supply and demand for illicit drugs.

17. Moving forward we will continue to work together in implementing our Work Plan.
Conclusion

18. We believe that the world drug problem is a shared responsibility and working collectively is integral in combating the drug problem. We also respect the sovereign right of each state to decide and implement policies that best cater to their domestic circumstances as there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach in addressing the drug issues. Hence, we will resolutely reject any attempts to universalise any drug policies, including calls to legalise controlled drugs.

18. We have achieved some encouraging progress in combating the drug scourge thus far but work still remains to be done. ASEAN has demonstrated that by working together as a community, we can send a strong message to international crime and drug syndicates that ASEAN will not allow such organisations to gain a foothold in our region, and to our people and the communities that drug use is not acceptable.

19. To this end, we extend our best wishes and cooperation for the 62\textsuperscript{nd} CND.

I thank you, Madam Chair / Mr. Chairman.

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