Statement by

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On behalf of
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

At
The Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly

On

The Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

(Agenda Items 118)

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(Please check against delivery)
Mr. President

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Association of South East Asian Nations or ASEAN comprising 10 Member States: namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

At the outset, let me express our appreciation to the co-chairs of the GA68 Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly: H.E. Ambassador František Ružička of Slovakia and H.E. Ambassador Norachit Sinhaseni of Thailand for their stewardship in facilitating the Ad Hoc Working Group during the 68th Session of the General Assembly.

We are pleased with the progress made under their co-chiarmanship. We are also pleased that GA resolution 68/307 was adopted by consensus on 10 September 2014. Let me also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to H.E. Mr. John Ashe, President of the General Assembly for the 68th session, for his selection of the co-chairs and the importance he gave to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

We welcome the opening address by H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President of the General Assembly for the 69th session, on 16 September 2014, in which he highlighted his priorities which include the continued focus on both the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council. We look forward to working with the new co-chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group appointed by H.E. Mr. Kutesa.

Next year we will be celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations. This special occasion provides us a unique opportunity to reinvigorate the reform of the United Nations. We should use this opportunity not only to celebrate the achievement of the United Nations in the past seven decades but also to contemplate a fresh approach to the reform of the United Nations which will make it more effective in responding to the needs of its member states and addressing challenges we are facing today and in the future. And one critical component of that reform is the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, which is the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations.

Let me highlight some of the key issues, which we hope, should be given a special consideration in the 69th session.

First, we welcome the reaffirmation in GA resolution 68/307: the importance and benefit of continuing interaction between the General Assembly and international and regional forums. The year 2015 is a special year not only for the United Nations but also for ASEAN as we will celebrate the establishment of the ASEAN Community. As one of the most successful regional organizations, ASEAN looks forward to interacting with all international and regional forums to address the issues of common interest and concern. I hope that concrete measures or actions will be taken to follow up on this important direction given by the General Assembly.

Second, we welcome the decision of the General Assembly to conduct the elections of the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of the ECOSOC about six months before the elected members assume their responsibilities, beginning at the 70th session. We hope that the elected members, especially those from
small and middle developing countries, will have more time to prepare for their new responsibilities. For the Security Council’s election, we particularly hope that the earlier election will provide an earlier opportunity for the elected non-permanent members to observe the Council meetings.

Third, on the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General, we welcome the reiteration in GA resolution 68/307 that the process of selecting and appointing the Secretary-General differs from that of other executive heads in the UN system given the important and unique role of the Secretary-General. We appreciate a common call by a number of member states for the improvement of the process without having to amend the Charter, such as convening hearings or meetings of the General Assembly for an exchange of views with candidates in order to make the process more inclusive, transparent, interactive and credible.

We hope that concrete improvement will be agreed upon in the Ad Hoc Working Group during the 69th session so that it can be implemented in the 70th session, well in time for the selection of the next Secretary-General expected to take place in 2016. We also hope that the President of the General Assembly will play an active role in this process in accordance with the role accorded to him or her by relevant resolutions, while at the same time respecting fully the provisions of the Charter.

Last but not least, we hope to see further strengthening of the institutional memory of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. We are pleased that in GA resolution 68/307 a repeated request was made by the General Assembly to the Secretary-General to submit, in the context of the proposed program budget for the biennium 2016-2017, proposals to review the budget allocation to the Office of the President of the General Assembly in accordance with existing procedures.

It is important to note that a number of member states have made continued calls for an increase in the budget allocation to the Office of the President of the General Assembly, which has been kept unchanged since 1998 with only some inflation adjustment, currently $300,000. As one of the most important multilateral posts, the President of the General Assembly, no matter which country he or she comes from, should not be financially constrained in serving in the important post. We, therefore, hope that the proposals from the SG will be submitted and considered in the preparation for the next biennium.

Mr. President

Before concluding, let me quote remarks by Martin Luther King Jr. referred in the opening address by H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa that “Everything that is done in the world is done by hope”. I have expressed our hopes on behalf of ASEAN Member States and wish to assure you of our continued commitment to constructively engage in the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Working Group in the 69th session with the aim of reaching concrete outcomes for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly on the eve of its 70 Anniversary.

I thank you!