Mr. Chairman,

I speak on behalf of the members of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) - Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

ASEAN associates with the statement made by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the G-77 and China on this agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite robust economic growth in Asia, economic discrepancy is still prevalent in the region. The forces of globalization, while bringing about economic opportunities and growth, have at the same time caused increasing inequalities. This underlined the need for concerted efforts to narrow the development gaps.

ASEAN believes that poverty eradication is essential to successfully narrow the gaps in development and bring about sustainable development.
As the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon succinctly highlighted in his opening remarks at the 5th ASEAN-UN Summit last month (10 Oct 2013) – "Poverty eradication must be our priority, and sustainable development our guide and principle.,” as member states strive to accelerate their efforts in meeting the MDGs by 2015, the efforts must move in tandem with poverty eradication at its core.

Addressing developmental gaps through community empowerment

As the saying goes – "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime”. It was in this spirit that the Eighth ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (8th AMRDPE) which was held on 5 July 2013 in Indonesia, adopted the theme “Advancing Community Empowerment to Enhance a Better and Sustainable Livelihood”.

Financing to provide individuals with access to food, shelter, health, education and security is important but it is only one aspect of development assistance. To raise people out of poverty, we must empower them to pursue economic self-advancement.

A good example would be Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and founder of Grameen Bank, Muhammad Yunus' model of microcredit. Microcredit is not used to fulfill the needs of the poor directly but rather, it is used to equip individuals with the means to provide for their own needs. In short, financing is used as a tool to spur self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

Poverty Eradication and Rural Development

If we are to see sustained results from our efforts to raise people out of poverty, we must ensure that first, there is broad access to economic opportunities created by growth, and that second, individuals are equipped to tap on these opportunities.

In this regard, ASEAN recognises that poverty eradication and rural development are two issues that are intricately intertwined. It is impossible to talk about one without mentioning the other.
During the ASEAN Forum on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication this year, government officials and NGO/CSO representatives exchanged views on national strategies, good practices, and experiences in empowering communities to improve and sustain the welfare and livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable groups, and to become self-reliant.

A participatory approach was adopted to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of community empowerment programmes through the involvement of the communities themselves, village leaders, civil society, grassroots organisations, volunteers, private sector and other stakeholders.

Mr Chairman,

Good progress has been made in the implementation of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint towards poverty alleviation. The Blueprint has recently completed its mid-term review whereby the report was adopted by the ASEAN Leaders at the 23rd ASEAN Summit in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam. Taking into account the recommendations of the mid-term review, the Blueprint will contribute to the prioritisation of efforts towards the ASEAN Community building by 2015, and provide input to the envisioning of ASEAN’s post-2015 development and poverty eradication agenda.

ASEAN intends to adopt a two-pronged strategy of balanced growth and inclusive development to achieve this.

This includes sharing of information on multi-sectoral strategies and programmes in ASEAN Member States that are targeting at the individual, family and community levels such as greater access to microfinance/credit, promotion of entrepreneurship skills, women’s empowerment, promotion of local agricultural products and farming techniques, inclusive education for the poor children, technical and vocational skills development

ASEAN also adopted the Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (2011-2015) which outlines the strategic thrusts and concrete actions in six priority areas: (1) sustainable rural development and rural economic growth; (2) food security and food sovereignty amidst climate change; (3) social protection and safety nets; (4) development of infrastructure and
human resources in rural areas; (5) constituency building for rural development and poverty eradication; and (6) monitoring and evaluation of the poverty reduction in the region.

Partnerships

While poverty eradication is often an issue of internal, rather than external factors, more can be achieved with assistance from regional and international partners.

ASEAN views that developed countries can and should provide strong support to developing countries, particularly the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), to raise their people out of poverty. In this regard, we urge developed countries to meet their commitment to the internationally agreed target of 0.7% ODA for all developing countries, as well as to meet the internationally agreed target of 0.15% - 0.20% of their GNP to LDCs.

Cooperation through regional institutions and initiatives - from the sharing of best practices, to technology transfer, to the creation of new economic opportunities through economic integration and liberalisation - can help accelerate the progress of efforts to raise people from poverty.

Mr Chairman,

2015 is an important year for ASEAN as it marks the establishment of the ASEAN Community. The year 2015 is also an important threshold for the United Nations as it marks the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

ASEAN stands committed to address socio-economic disparities and poverty through implementing initiatives which will realize the MDGs.

Thank you.