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Statement by
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to the United Nations
on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Agenda Item 16:
Information and Communication Technologies for Development

New York, 22 October 2013
Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the ten Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. ASEAN also aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, I would like to reiterate the importance that ASEAN attaches to the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a key driver in economic and social transformation. With only less than two years left towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it is imperative for all Member States to maximise the full potential of ICT, as a tool to achieve the MDGs and meet the needs of our people. Furthermore, we believe that ICT should be one of the key elements in the post-2015 development agenda as it continues to be the driving force for development and progress towards achieving sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

We take note that much progress have been made since Member States agreed to the Geneva and Tunis phases of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS). It is apparent that there continue to be good progress towards enhancing ICT connectivity and access to technology in all countries, especially in the usage of mobile telephone, where more than half of the global mobile phone subscribers are in the Asia Pacific region.
Thus, it is important for us to continue to strengthen cooperation between and among stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of the WSIS, such as, through the promotional and regional multi-stakeholder thematic platforms with developing countries, including the LDCs, development partners and actors in the ICT sector.

Mr. Chairman,

ASEAN remains concerned with the widening of the digital divide between developed and developing countries. According to statistics released by the International Communications Union (ITU) in February 2013, only about 31% of the population in developing countries will have access to the Internet by the end of this year, compared with 77% in developed countries. This pervasive digital divide indicates the need for Member States to address this challenge, particularly as ICT plays a big role in development, and promotes growth in all sectors including education, health-care, finance and environment.

The impacts of the global financial crisis have deprived of much-needed financing and investments in the ICT industries of the developing countries. Resources that should have been used for the ICT sector have, for the most part, been diverted to other sectors such as development programmes that include food production and housing. We are aware that development programmes are important but at the same time ICT should also be given equal attention. In this regard, it is crucial for Member States, as well as the private sector, to work hand-in-hand to increase the integrity and reliability of telecommunications networks and improve the security and resilience of ICT infrastructure.
Mr. Chairman,

As ASEAN moves towards building an ASEAN Community in 2015, much progress has been made towards integrating our people, culture and individual economies. One of the main variables that have contributed towards our integration is through the ASEAN ICT Master Plan 2015 (AIM 2015). This will be done through six strategic thrusts, namely economic transformation, people empowerment and engagement, innovation, infrastructure development, human capital development, and bridging the digital divide. So far, our ICT cooperation have resulted in more than 78% of our citizens receiving access to ICT and our ICT industry employs over 11.7 million people contributing above USD 32 billion annually to ASEAN's GDP.

At the same time, ASEAN is attempting to undergo a digital revolution as we recognize the full benefits it will bring, especially in improving trade facilitation between and among ASEAN; spur economic growth as well as ensure that we do not lag in the global development process. This is also to ensure that we are better positioned to tap the benefits of ICT and keep pace with the developments in other parts of the world.

Mr. Chairman,

ASEAN appreciates the ongoing efforts of the ITU, UNIDO, UNESCO, UNCTAD and other UN agencies and especially ESCAP to bridge the digital divide, and promote the use of ICT as a means to fuel productivity, improve e-learning and strengthen development in developing countries. We also support the efforts of the Secretary-General in
promoting consultations among Governments and all stakeholders in internet-related public policy matters.

We believe the UN and its subsidiary bodies have a vital role in promoting and expanding development in this sector. Therefore, ASEAN reaffirms its commitment and support towards the work of the Second Committee in creating an effective and sustainable response to the challenges and opportunities of building a truly global Information Society that benefits all our people.

Thank you.