Statement
by
Senior Colonel Nattawut Sabyeroop
Military Adviser and Minister,
Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations,
on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
before the Fourth Committee
of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Agenda item 53: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

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Building Bridges for Partnership
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ASEAN Candidate for the UN Security Council 2017 – 2018
ASEAN’s Statement on Agenda 53: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which comprises Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Viet Nam, and my own country Thailand.

I would like to align this statement with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

At the outset, allow me to take this opportunity to express ASEAN’s appreciation to Mr. Hervé Ladsous and Ms. Ameerah Haq for their comprehensive briefings. Under their able leadership, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support have played a vital role in providing direction, policies and necessary support for UN peacekeeping missions around the world.

Mr. Chair,

The year 2013 marks the 65th anniversary of the UN peacekeeping operation. It is an important milestone in the service of international community. At the same time, this year alone has witnessed the loss of lives of more than 70 peacekeepers, and many more were injured. We share the grief and express our condolences to the bereaved families of the fallen peacekeepers. The attack on UNAMID forces, as recent a few weeks ago in Darfur, is a constant reminder of the reality of risks and dangers that peacekeepers around the world have to face every day.

In this regard, ASEAN condemns, in the strongest terms, the killings of UN peacekeeping personnel, and all acts of violence against them, particularly the abductions of the Philippine peacekeepers in the Golan Heights earlier this year. We reaffirm the need for peacekeeping missions to have sufficient capabilities and resources to ensure safety and defense of peacekeepers and call for all parties to fully respect their protected status under international law.

Mr. Chair,

ASEAN stresses the indispensable role of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations in reviewing all aspects of peacekeeping operations and providing overall policy guidance. We therefore echo our disappointment and concern over this year’s deadlock on procedural matters in the Special Committee and urge all sides to work together to overcome this impasse. ASEAN regrets that an opportunity to positively and constructively contribute to policies on peacekeeping operations which impact the lives
and well-being of our peacekeepers – consistent with the Special Committee’s mandate – was not utilized in the 67th session.

In this regard, ASEAN calls for an immediate meeting of the open-ended inter-sessional group of “friends of the Chair” established by the Fourth Committee to discuss its working methods. We stand ready to constructively participate in this working group to resolving the pending issues.

**Mr. Chair,**

Protection of civilians has become a crucial component of peacekeeping. ASEAN notes the Security Council’s authorization of protection of civilians mandate in a number of peacekeeping missions, with a focus on women and children, as well as response to sexual violence. In order to ensure the exemplary ethical conduct of peacekeeping personnel, peacekeepers need to be well-equipped with knowledge of international law and understand different local cultures. It is also important that the UN’s commitment to zero tolerance policy on sexual abuse must be implemented and fully enforced at all levels.

The effectiveness of peacekeeping missions and the safety of peacekeepers are always the centerpiece of UN peacekeeping operations. In this regard, ASEAN notes the use of modern technologies on a case by case basis, particularly in MONUSCO (DRC). ASEAN reiterates the importance that their use must uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and fundamental principles of peacekeeping.

ASEAN has also been following closely the developments and the shift of mandates of newly authorized peacekeeping missions, from peacekeeping to peace enforcement. We note that the creation of the Intervention Brigade within MONUSCO, as authorized by resolution 2098 (2013) aims to neutralize and reduce the threats of armed group potentially enabling better protection of civilians.

However, these developments have not come about without concerns regarding their consistency with the basic principles of peacekeeping. It is therefore necessary that regular monitoring and reviews must be put in place to ensure that there is sufficient information to form the basis of future policy decision making on the matter through the work of the C-34.

Close coordination between all stakeholders, particularly the host government, is crucial for the success of peacekeeping missions. ASEAN therefore supports the Security Council’s practice of holding regular briefings for and meetings with the troop and police contributing countries. We also urge that troop and police contributors must be included in the dialogue at every stage of peacekeeping operations, especially at the stages of mandate drafting and review.
Moreover, it is important to remind ourselves that the three principles of UN peacekeeping, namely consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate, remain at the basic tenet of all peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Chair,

ASEAN highlights the need for enhanced integration between peacekeeping and peacebuilding. As peacekeepers are often regarded early peacebuilders, it is important that they have relevant trainings on civilian capacities and institution-building in order to ensure a successful transition from a conflict-affected state to sustainable peace.

At the same time, it must be stressed that post-conflict development should be based on engagement and dialogue with host countries, in order to create a sense of national ownership. The roles of the Peacebuilding Commission and of South-South and triangular cooperation are essential in developing national capacity and mobilizing resources for institution-building.

Mr. Chair,

At present, almost 4,000 troops and police officers from ASEAN Member States are serving in various peacekeeping missions around the world. It is a testament of our commitment to the cause of international peace and security. In addition, peacekeeping is one of the important elements of the ASEAN Political and Security Community. We are working on the establishment of ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network to enhance coordination amongst ASEAN national authorities on peacekeeping.

As part of the efforts to promote confidence building, conflict prevention and peaceful resolution of dispute, ASEAN also attaches great importance in cooperation with dialogue partners on peacekeeping issues, through two mechanisms, namely ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus).

The ARF Peacekeeping Experts’ Meeting is a mechanism where regional experts, both military and civilians, can discuss and exchange views and information on issues pertinent to peacekeeping. The 6th ARF Peacekeeping Experts’ Meeting of was held recently in Beijing, during 15-17 October 2013, with a focus on the training of peacekeepers.

ADMM Plus has established the Experts’ Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations for military personnel to cooperate through best-practice sharing and joint exercises. The latest ADMM Plus Experts’ Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations “Planning Conference for Table Top Experts” was held in Manila on 24-25 October 2013.
Mr. Chair,

Allow me to add the following remarks in my national capacity. Over past years, Thailand has always committed to and rendered our support to the cause of peacekeeping. Since the inception of UN peacekeeping operations, Thai military and police personnel, men as well as women, have joined more than 20 missions around the world. Currently we are serving in five UN peacekeeping missions, including Sudan, South Sudan, Kashmir, Liberia, and Haiti.

Thailand continues to look for opportunities to increase its role and presence in UN peacekeeping operations, in particular the contribution of specialized troops such as army engineers, medical units and female officer units.

Thailand’s approach to peacekeeping is based on the linkages between security, human rights and development. Thailand’s peacekeepers are trained to respect local cultures and beliefs. Our assistance in local and community development in Timor-Leste, Haiti and Darfur by sharing best practices in agriculture, healthcare and water resource management with local villages, is welcomed and resonates well with the emphasis on prevention of backsliding into conflict by improving the livelihood and wellbeing of the peoples.

Thailand also attaches great importance to the role of women in peacekeeping. Currently, women constitute only 3% of the military personnel and 10% of the police personnel in UN Peacekeeping missions. Thailand strongly believes that greater presence of female peacekeepers would significantly benefit existing peacekeeping missions, particularly where violence against and exploitation of women and children are prevalent. The Royal Thai Police has therefore set the goal to increase the number of our female police officers, in response to the request of the UNSG, to join UN missions in different parts of the world, to render assistance, comfort and protection for vulnerable women and children.

Mr. Chair,

To conclude, let me assure you of ASEAN’s and Thailand’s commitment to support the cause of peacekeeping. We will continue to adapt and strengthen our peacekeeping roles and capacities to suit current developments in peacekeeping and field requirements.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.