CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT OF THE 27TH ASEAN-JAPAN SUMMIT
VIENTIANE, LAO PDR
10 OCTOBER 2024

1. The 27th ASEAN-Japan Summit was held on 10 October 2024 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The Summit was chaired by H.E. Mr. Sonexay Siphandone, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The Summit was attended by ASEAN Member States, H.E. Mr. Ishiba Shigeru, Prime Minister of Japan, as well as the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste as Observer. The Secretary-General of ASEAN was also in attendance.

2. We reiterated our support for the Lao PDR's priorities for its ASEAN Chairmanship 2024 under the theme "ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience," which reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to strengthening the ASEAN Community through intensifying ASEAN cooperation under the three community pillars, promoting infrastructure connectivity, narrowing the development gaps, enhancing economic integration and people-to-people exchanges, and further strengthening ASEAN's relations with external partners, while maintaining ASEAN's relevance and ASEAN Centrality in the evolving regional architecture. We applauded the Lao PDR for successfully convening the 57th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) and Related Meetings in July 2024, in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

3. We welcomed the establishment of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) at the 26th ASEAN-Japan Summit in Jakarta, in September 2023. We recalled the successful convening of the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in Tokyo, Japan, on 16-18 December 2023, and its substantive deliverables, including the adoption of the Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation - *Trusted Partners* - and its Implementation Plan which set out the direction for the partnership and looked forward to the effective follow-up to the outcomes of the Commemorative Summit.

4. We welcomed the significant progress of the ASEAN-Japan CSP and noted the good progress in the new Implementation Plan of the Joint Vision Statement, which serves as the comprehensive guide for ASEAN-Japan cooperation. We reaffirmed ASEAN's and Japan's commitment to further strengthening the ASEAN-Japan CSP, which importantly contributes to maintaining peace, security, stability, and prosperity in the region.

5. ASEAN appreciated Japan's unwavering support to strengthen ASEAN Centrality and unity, as well as the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) in line with, among others, the Joint Statement of the 23rd ASEAN-Japan Summit on Cooperation on AOIP**.** We noted that Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) concept, which shares relevant fundamental principles with the AOIP. ASEAN also welcomed Japan's renewed commitment to supporting the ASEAN-centred, open, inclusive, transparent, resilient, and rules-based regional architecture that upholds international law, and built upon ASEAN-led mechanisms. We reaffirmed our commitment to advancing the ASEAN-Japan CSP, including through enhanced practical cooperation and collaboration under workstreams on the four priority areas of the AOIP. We looked forward to the implementation of more concrete programs and projects under JAIF 3.0, supported by Japan's contribution of USD 100 million in 2023.

6. ASEAN welcomed Japan's support for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Post-2025 Strategic Plan, and reaffirms ASEAN's commitment in realising a sustainable, resilient, inclusive and dynamic ASEAN by 2045. ASEAN underscored the importance of stakeholder and public engagement initiatives under the Supporting the Development of the ASCC Post-2025 Strategic Plan Project, which fosters deeper collaboration and partnerships, and engagement with stakeholders and the wider public.

7. We agreed to continue enhancing cooperation in addressing security issues of common interest and concern, including transnational crime, maritime security, non-proliferation and disarmament through various ASEAN-led mechanisms including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). We underlined the need to ensure the timely and effective implementation of the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) - Japan Work Plan on Cooperation to Combat Transnational Crime (2023-2027) under the ambit of the ASEAN Plus Japan Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC + Japan) Consultation mechanism. We underscored the importance of strengthening cooperation between ASEAN and Japan in combating illicit drugs in the region, particularly under the framework of ASEAN Plus Japan Senior Officials' Meeting on Drug Matters (ASOD + Japan) Consultation. ASEAN welcomed Japan's continued support for capacity building activities in the field of cybersecurity for ASEAN Member States through the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Policy and Working Group Meetings, ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Capacity Building Centre (AJCCBC), the ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence (ASCCE) and the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Policy Meeting and ASEAN Regional Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) and encouraged enhanced cooperation in countering cyber threats. We noted Japan's support for the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC), especially for combating Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

8. We welcomed the progress made in the defence cooperation between ASEAN and Japan under the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). We commended the successful conclusion of Japan's co-chairmanship of the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group (EWG) on Peacekeeping Operations with Viet Nam in the 2021-2024 cycle and looked forward to Japan's co-chairmanship in the ADMM-Plus EWG on

Maritime Security with the Philippines in the 2024-2027 cycle. We appreciated Japan's co-chairmanship of the 8th ARF Peacekeeping Experts' Meeting alongside Indonesia in June 2024. We also acknowledged Japan's contribution to enhance the capacity of defence authorities of ASEAN Member States through the "Vientiane Vision 2.0: Japan's Defense Cooperation Initiative with ASEAN" and the newly launched "Japan-ASEAN Ministerial Initiative for Enhanced Defense Cooperation: JASMINE," which are monitored through the Japan-ASEAN Defense Vice-Ministerial Forum. We welcomed Japan joining the ASEAN Direct Communications Infrastructure (ADI), which reflects greater commitment to regional confidence-building. We appreciated Japan's continued support to address humanitarian aspect of landmines and explosive remnants of war in the region, notably its support for mine-clearance projects including through promoting intra-regional cooperation in mine-affected ASEAN Member States and for the work of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) that is focused on victim assistance. In this regard, ASEAN noted Japan's Comprehensive Package of Assistance for Humanitarian Mine Action, which was announced in July 2024.

9. We welcomed initiatives undertaken by ASEAN and Japan to further strengthen its cooperation in the field of law and justice such as the convening of the ASEAN-Japan Special Meeting of Justice Ministers, the ASEAN-G7 Justice Minister's Interface and the ASEAN-Japan Special Youth Forum for Promoting the Rule of Law on 5-7 July 2023. We encouraged the implementation of the outcomes of these meetings, particularly the Joint Statement and ASEAN-Japan Work Plan on Law and Justice under the spirit of friendship, cooperation, and equal partnership, and committed to elevating the ASEAN-Japan cooperation in the field of law and justice to the next phase.

10. We welcomed the steady growth in ASEAN-Japan economic relations. Japan was the fourth largest trading partner, with two-way merchandise trade amounting to USD 239.47 billion in 2023. Japan was ASEAN's fifth largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI), with total FDI inflows from Japan, amounting to USD 14.51 billion in 2023. We underlined the need to further deepen and expand trade and investment, including through the effective implementation of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement. We noted the activities carried out by the ASEAN Economic Ministers - Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (AEM-METI) Consultation, Economic and Industrial Cooperation Committee (AMEICC), the Federation of Japanese Chambers of Commerce and Industry in ASEAN (FJCCIA), the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), and the ASEAN-Japan Business Council (AJBC), and the ASEAN-Japan Centre (AJC) as well as the progress in the discussion towards introducing the electronic certificate of origin (e-CO) data exchange scheme for the AJCEP Agreement.

11. We encouraged the officials to continue their work to ensure the transparent, smooth and effective implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) Agreement. We reiterated the commitment of RCEP Participating Countries (RPCs) to refrain from taking any measures inconsistent with the obligations under the RCEP Agreement, as well as to keep markets open, free, and rules-

based, to remove unnecessary barriers to trade and strengthen trade and investment facilitation for all. We noted the progress of the establishment of the RCEP Support Unit (RSU) and welcomed the newly recruited Executive Director of the RSU. We looked forward to the full operationalisation of the RSU within this year to enable it to provide support to the RCEP Joint Committee (RJC) and its subsidiary bodies.

12. We reiterated our shared commitment to further strengthening ASEAN-Japan economic partnership, including through upholding the multilateral trading system, enhancing regional economic integration, and underscoring the importance of multilateralism and free trade.

13. We encouraged the effective implementation and monitoring of the activities under the "Future Design and Action Plan of Innovative and Sustainable ASEAN-Japan Economic Co-Creation 2023-2033" which was endorsed at the 29th AEM-METI Consultation on 22 August 2023, and updated in 30th AEM-METI Consultation, including through future-oriented measures, such as the ASEAN-Japan Circular Economy Initiative (AJCEI) to realise the ASEAN-Japan Economic Co-Creation Vision, through fair and mutually beneficial economic co-creation. ASEAN welcomed Japan's support to promote quality infrastructure projects through "Leading Asia's Private Infrastructure Fund 2 (LEAP2)" with the Asian Development Bank as part of initiatives to expand and leverage Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)'s Private-Sector Investment Finance.

14. We encouraged Japan to contribute to ASEAN's capacity building, particularly in emerging areas such as digital trade, AI, 5G/6G, and Open RAN, among others. We acknowledged the importance of facilitating free flow of data across border, development of digital connectivity, and strengthening of consumer and business trust in the digital economy. We encouraged Japan to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN in green infrastructure, sustainable economy, sustainable development and prosperity, rural networking and development, poverty eradication, supply chain resilience, financial integrity and inclusion, empowerment of SMEs, human resource development, labour migration, civil service matters, sustainable forest management, science and technology, energy transition, next-generation automotive industry, among others. We encouraged Japan to prioritise digital and green capacity-building projects

15. We encouraged further collaboration under the ASEAN-Japan Co-Creation Initiative for the Next-Generation Automotive Industry, which was endorsed at the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. We noted Japan's support in the fields of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and food security and acknowledged Japan's support for the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC).

16. We commended the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) for its continued research and analysis of key regional economic issues that support ASEAN economic integration agenda and promote effective policy-making in the region's economic integration. We also acknowledged the contribution of Japan to ERIA,

including Japan's support in the establishment of the ERIA Digital Innovation and Sustainable Economy Centre (E-DISC).

17. We welcomed the initiative by ASEAN and Japan to strengthen cooperation in the tourism sector, aimed at promoting sustainable tourism and enhancing mutual exchanges. This initiative is grounded in the Joint Media Statement from the ASEAN-Japan Tourism Ministers' Special Dialogue, which took place on 28 October 2023, in Tokyo, Japan.

18. We encouraged further effective implementation of the ASEAN-Japan Technical Cooperation Agreement (TCA), which would further contribute to the ASEAN Community building efforts. We appreciated the ASEAN-Japan Centre for its contribution to the promotion of trade, investment, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges and welcomed its reappointment of Dr. HIRABAYASHI Kunihiko as Secretary General as well as its Council decision by consensus to amend the Agreement Establishing the Centre.

19. We appreciated Japan for the commitment in strengthening science, technology and innovation (STI) cooperation, such as Japan-ASEAN Science, Technology and Innovation Platform (JASTIP), Networked Exchange, United Strength for Stronger Partnerships between Japan and ASEAN (NEXUS) and ASEAN-Japan Innovation Week and Improvement of Rice Paddy Area Statistics and Damage Assessment using Earth Observation Satellites for ASEAN.

20. We also welcomed the inaugural initiative, Japan-ASEAN High-Level Roundtable on Science, Technology, and Innovation, which was conducted in Paris, in April 2024, that introduced a new USD 100 million program over a span of five years, Networked Exchange, United Strength for Stronger Partnerships between Japan and ASEAN (NEXUS), that aims to further strengthen the human resource development and capacity building in STI collaboration between Japan and ASEAN through various initiatives, including human resources exchange/development program, international joint research program, symposia and other approaches.

21. We affirmed the necessity of enhancing energy cooperation and adequate financing to support the acceleration of energy transitions through various practical pathways tailored to national circumstances in achieving sustainable economic growth, energy security and addressing climate change simultaneously. We welcomed the progress of the implementation of the Joint Vision Statement and its Implementation Plan adopted at Commemorative Summit in Tokyo on December 2023, including possible collaboration with Japan's initiatives such as the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) platform as well the Asia Energy Transition Initiative (AETI). In addition, we noted initiatives such as Asia GX Consortium to promote transition finance in the region. We reaffirmed our support for the expeditious establishment of the ASEAN Power Grid.

22. We welcomed the adoption of the ASEAN-Japan MIDORI Cooperation Plan during the first ASEAN-Japan Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry Meeting, held on 4 October 2023, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. We underscored the significance of the Plan in strengthening resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems to ensure regional

food security. We encouraged ASEAN and Japan to prioritise the identification and implementation of pilot projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting circular economy practices, minimizing the use of harmful agro-chemicals, curbing crop burning practices, and advancing smart agriculture initiatives. Additionally, we looked forward to Japan's continued support in ensuring food security, which includes the effective implementation of the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) and the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS).

23. We noted the importance of the establishment of high-quality intellectual property (IP) cooperation through the framework of ASEAN-Japan Heads of IP Offices Meeting and the ASEAN-Japan IP Action Plan.

24. ASEAN appreciated Japan's continued support in advancing the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 in line with the Joint Statement of the 22nd ASEAN-Japan Summit on Connectivity, and looked forward to continued engagement and support from Japan for the ASEAN Connectivity Strategic Plan of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and its future implementation. ASEAN also welcomed Japan's continued support for strengthening regional connectivity under the Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative announced in September 2023 including transportation infrastructure development, digital connectivity, maritime cooperation, supply chain resilience, as well as "human" and "knowledge" connectivity. We looked forward to the successful conclusion of a more liberal and mutually beneficial ASEAN-Japan Air Services Agreement with a view to enhancing air connectivity between Japan and ASEAN Member States. We took note of the progress of various cooperation projects and activities under the ASEAN-Japan Transport Partnership (AJTP).

25. ASEAN welcomed Japan's active and continued support for the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN) such as through the convening of annual ASEAN-Japan Smart Cities Network High-Level Meeting that promotes dialogue and knowledge sharing between ASEAN and Japanese cities and private sector. We looked forward to the convening of the 6th ASEAN-Japan Smart Cities Network High-Level Meeting in October 2024, in Japan.

26. ASEAN welcomed Japan's continued support for ASEAN's integration and community-building efforts and looked forward to Japan's continued support for the implementation of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Work Plan IV (2021- 2025) to promote inclusive and sustainable development across the region, as well as programmes to foster human resource development, and narrow the development gap among ASEAN Member States. ASEAN appreciated Japan's continued support for the IAI Attachment Programme, including new participation of Timor-Leste from the next Batch, as well as its support for the Master's Degree Programme, which is designed for Attachment Programme Graduates from CLMV Countries. ASEAN looked forward to Japan's further support to ASEAN's sub-regional development efforts, including through the Mekong-Japan cooperation and Initiative for ASEAN Integration to promote inclusive growth, sustainable and equitable development across the region.

27. We appreciated our strong partnership in the establishment and operationalisation of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED). ASEAN welcomed Japan's continued commitment of USD 50 million through JAIF for the Centre and also appreciated Japan's decision to dispatch Japanese experts to support the operationalisation of ACPHEED as well as to build and strengthen the collaboration with Japan Institute for Health Security (JIHS) to be established in 2025. ASEAN reaffirmed the commitment to the completion of the negotiation of the Centre's establishment agreement at the earliest opportunity and to the preparation for the smooth launch of the works by the Japanese experts. ASEAN looked forward to continuing collaboration with Japan and its support to the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies (RRMS).

28. ASEAN commended Japan's sustained cooperation in institutionalising regional health preparedness and response capacity to disasters guided by the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Disaster Health Management, through the Project for Strengthening ASEAN Regional Capacity on Disaster Health Management – Phase 2 (ARCH Project - Phase 2) (2022-2026). We expressed determination to strengthen the healthcare and welfare system under the Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AHWIN), as well as Japan's Global Health Strategy to achieve more resilient, equitable, and sustainable Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in the region. In this context, ASEAN noted Japan's efforts toward the establishment of the UHC Knowledge Hub in Japan in 2025 in collaboration with World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank, and expressed strong interests in utilizing the hub to promote UHC in the region.

29. We encouraged strengthening cooperation on improving health and welfare services for the elderly in ASEAN Member States and Japan, including through cooperation with the ASEAN Centre for Active Ageing and Innovation (ACAI). ASEAN also welcomed Japan's cooperation on public health, health system strengthening and access to care, social protection, and occupational safety and health through various platforms, and looked forward to the next ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials' Meeting on Caring Societies scheduled in late November.

30. We welcomed continued efforts to foster people-to-people, education, sports and cultural, intellectual science and technology exchanges, and research collaborations, through various programmes, including the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS), Partnership to Co-create a Future with the Next Generation: WA Project 2.0 - a new comprehensive people-to-people exchange program funded with 40 billion yen over the next 10 years, Sakura Science Exchange Program, International Fellowships for Research in Japan, the Ship for Southeast Asian and Japanese Youth Program (SSEAYP), the exchanges through the ASEAN Council of Japan Alumni (ASCOJA) and Asia Japan Alumni (ASJA) International, Sport for Tomorrow and ASEAN-Japan Actions on Sports, and ASIA KAKEHASHI Project+(Plus). We explored the need to enhance cultural cooperation, including through the implementation of the ASEAN-Japan Work Plan on Cooperation in Culture and the Arts (2022-2025).

31. ASEAN acknowledged Japan as a strong and long-standing supporter of ASEAN in strengthening disaster risk reduction and commended Japan's continued collaboration in building disaster resilience in the region through the implementation of the ASEAN-Japan Work Plan on Disaster Management (AADMER) (2021-2025). ASEAN appreciated Japan's support to the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) for the Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN (DELSA) Phase IV, Strengthening the Capacity of the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) Phase III, and the AHA Centre Executive Leadership in Emergency and Disaster Management Programme (ACE-LEDMP), and the Enhancement of the AHA Centre's ICT System, which will provide further guidance in enhancing disaster resilience in the region and realising ASEAN's aspiration to be a global leader in disaster risk reduction. ASEAN also appreciated Japan's support for the development of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) (2026-2030). As such, we also encouraged collaboration in strengthening climate and disaster resilience for sustainable development in accordance with the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Sustainable Resilience.

32. ASEAN welcomed Japan's support for addressing the unprecedented triple global crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss in the region under the Strategic Program for ASEAN Climate and Environment (SPACE) including the ASEAN-Japan Resource Circulation Partnerships on E-Waste and Critical Minerals (ARCPEC). We also welcomed Japan's support for the development of the ASEAN Climate Change Strategic Action Plan 2025-2030 (ACCSAP) to achieve ASEAN's Climate Vision 2050. We noted the conduct of the 18th ASEAN-Japan Dialogue on Environmental Cooperation in Vientiane, in July 2024. We further looked forward to advancing practical cooperation on green growth, including through the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change, on addressing transboundary haze pollution based on the second Haze-Free Roadmap (2023-2030) based on ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP), including through ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control (ACCTHPC) and the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre (ASMC), and on addressing marine pollution, climate change, biodiversity conservation and environmentally sustainable cities through the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), Regional Knowledge Centre For Marine Plastic Debris at ERIA and ASEAN Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogues (ACSDSD).

33. We looked forward to further strengthening cooperation on sports through the ASEAN Plus Japan Ministerial Meeting on Sports mechanism through the implementation of the ASEAN Work Plan on Sports (2021- 2025). We welcomed the formulation of the Chiang Mai Declaration on Strengthening ASEAN-Japan Cooperation on Sports towards 2030 to further enhance the advancement of the existing sports initiatives and to explore potential avenues for collaboration until 2030. Further to the 2022 ASEAN Declaration on Leveraging the Role of Sports in ASEAN Community-Building and Achieving the SDGS, we welcomed the implementation of ASEAN Football4SDGs project through funding from the JAIF.

34. ASEAN appreciated Japan's contribution to the works of the information sector through its contribution in the implementation of the Comprehensive Review of the ASEAN Strategic Plan for Information and Media (2016-2025) and the Development of a new Work Plan which will chart a new set of strategic directions for the cooperation in information and media to better respond to the fast-changing landscape.

35. We noted with satisfaction the continuous ASEAN-Japan cooperation on civil service matters through the implementation of the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation on Civil Service Matters (ACCSM+3) Work Plan (2021-2025) and looked forward to the conduct of the Workshop on Work Engagement and Well-being in the Public Service which will be held in Sapporo, Japan, on 10-11 October 2024. ASEAN was encouraged by the active participation of Japan at the Heads of Civil Service Meeting of the 7th ACCSM+3 and related meetings in Brunei Darussalam on 5-7 August 2024. ASEAN looked forward to the support of Japan in the development of the ACCSM+3 Work Plan 2026-2030.

36. ASEAN appreciated Japan's support to the "Expanded Application of the ASEAN Guiding Principles for Quality Assurance and Recognition of Competency Certification Systems" Project Phase 3. ASEAN also appreciated the participation of Japan on the implementation of the ASEAN Plus Three Senior Labour Officials' Meeting (SLOM+3) Work Plan (2021-2025) and looked forward to closer cooperation in the future SLOM+3 Work Plan (2026-2030).

37. ASEAN noted Japan's cooperation for promoting disability inclusion and the empowerment of persons with disabilities in the region particularly on the development of the Autism Mapping Report, which was coordinated by ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD). ASEAN welcomed Japan's continued commitment to supporting ASEAN's work on disability inclusive development including in the areas of developmental disorders and the nexus between disability inclusion, health, and active ageing, among others.

38. We applauded Japan's sustained commitment to organizing the ASEAN and Japan High Level Officials' Meeting (HLOM) on Caring Societies paving the way for sharing of good practices in building a society where everyone is supported and cared for Japan's leadership in convening this conference annually strengthened collaborative efforts of key sectors, particularly health, labour, and social welfare, to effectively deliver quality services to the people of ASEAN and ensure no one is left behind. We looked forward to the next HLOM scheduled in late November.

39. We looked forward to having more agile and active cooperation between ASEAN and Japan, especially in the field of social welfare and development including in strengthening the social service workforce in the region as a shared priority towards ensuring the rights and welfare of the most vulnerable groups and those at higher risks.

40. We stressed our support to achieving gender equality and social inclusion through the implementation of the ASEAN Gender-Mainstreaming Strategic Framework (AGMSF)

in all three ASEAN Community pillars. We also recognised the need to strengthen our cooperation in improving women's empowerment and gender equality. ASEAN wished to explore collaboration with Japan in supporting the advancement of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in the region, including through the implementation of Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace, and Security (RPA WPS) and its related work plans and initiatives.

41. We expressed concern over the recent developments in the Korean Peninsula and stressed the importance of continued peaceful dialogue among all concerned parties in order to realise lasting peace and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula. We expressed grave concern over the recent surge in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) missile testing and launches and the increased tension in the Korean Peninsula, which are a worrisome development that threatens peace and stability in the region. Some countries called on the DPRK to comply fully with all relevant UNSC resolutions and we called for peaceful dialogue among the concerned parties, and continuing working towards the realisation of lasting peace, and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula. We called for the full implementation of all relevant UNSC Resolutions. Some countries noted international efforts to bring about the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. Diplomatic efforts, including the creation of a conducive environment for peaceful dialogue among all concerned parties should remain a priority. We reiterated our readiness to play a constructive role, including through utilising ASEAN-led platforms such as the ARF in promoting a conducive atmosphere for peaceful dialogue amongst the concerned parties. We emphasised the importance of addressing issues of humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

42. We reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea and recognised the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability, and prosperity. We reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation. We further reaffirmed the need to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. We emphasised the importance of self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states, including those mentioned in the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea. We underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety and committed to maintaining and promoting an environment conducive to the negotiations of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) that is in accordance with International Law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

43. We discussed the developments in Myanmar and expressed our deep concern over the escalation of conflicts and humanitarian situation. We reaffirmed our support for

the ASEAN Leaders' Five-Point Consensus (5PC), which remains the main reference to address the political crisis in Myanmar. We also reaffirmed the relevant decisions in the ASEAN Leaders' Review and Decision on the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus. We denounced the continued acts of violence against civilians and public facilities and called for immediate cessation, and urged all parties involved to take concrete action to immediately halt indiscriminate violence, denounce any escalation, exercise utmost restraint, ensure the protection and safety of all civilians and create a conducive environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and inclusive national dialogue. We appreciated the ASEAN Chair's efforts and commended the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar, for his efforts to continue reaching out to parties concerned in a sustainable manner to help the people of Myanmar to achieve an inclusive and durable peaceful resolution that is Myanmar-owned and -led for peace, security and stability in the region. In this regard, we acknowledged the convening of the informal consultation consisting of the current, previous, and incoming Chairs of ASEAN on the implementation of the 5PC during the 57th AMM/PMCs and Related Meetings. We welcomed the adoption of the ASEAN Leaders' Review and Decision on the Implementation of the Five-Point Consensus. We reaffirmed our commitment to the continued and sustainable strategies and approaches to help the people of Myanmar find an inclusive and durable peaceful resolution that is Myanmar-Owned and -Led for peace, security and stability in the region.

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