



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION
OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS BY
AMBASSADOR BURHAN GAFOOR, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF SINGAPORE TO THE
UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 136:
PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET BIENNIAL
2018-2019 – SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS
CHAPEAU, 15 DECEMBER 2017**

Thank you Mr Chairman. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on this agenda item.

2 ASEAN thanks Ms Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas, Assistant Secretary-General, Controller, Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/72/371). We also thank Mr Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for introducing the ACABQ's report on this issue.

3 At the outset, ASEAN reiterates its full support for the role played by special political missions. Special political missions play an important role in responding to complex global security challenges. Given this, ASEAN believes it is crucial to ensure that special political missions can deliver on their mandates effectively, and without delay. We should also look seriously into better coordination across the peace continuum, between special political missions, peacekeeping operations, and other peacebuilding activities. This ensures that the United Nations works effectively as one, and avoids duplication.

4 However, the reality is that current financing arrangements have made it difficult for special political missions to operate at optimum capacity. It is particularly disappointing that for seven years running, this Committee has failed to take action on the recommendations of the ACABQ and High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on the funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions. These recommendations remain

relevant and increasingly pertinent. Special political missions exist in an evolving environment, and are themselves changing to respond to the situation on the ground. If we are serious about giving the Secretary-General the tools to respond effectively and flexibly to special situations, we must follow through in enabling his work.

Mr Chairman,

5 To this end, ASEAN reiterates our view that we should undertake a serious review of funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions. The budgets for special political missions have continued to grow exponentially in the last decade, especially if considered as a percentage of the Regular Budget. While the Secretariat has assured member states of efficiency gains to bring down costs, only a fraction of this has materialised. Meanwhile, the Regular Budget has shrunk in real terms, and continues to face downward pressure. The Secretariat has proposed a budget level of \$5.4 billion for 2018-2019, a 3.9% decrease from the appropriation for this biennium. Further reductions to the budget are likely. This means that special political missions will account for over 20% of the Regular Budget, which creates a burden on the ever-shrinking Regular Budget, cannibalising other priority items, such as development activities.

6 In this context, ASEAN urges the Committee to implement the ACABQ's recommendations on funding and backstopping of special political missions without further delay. It is particularly timely as we discuss reform of the United Nations, to look at reform in a holistic and coordinated manner. ASEAN reiterates that special political missions should be funded from a separate account, aligned with the budgetary cycle for peacekeeping operations, and charged on the peacekeeping scale. ASEAN recognizes the importance of adequately resourcing and sustaining predictable financing for the peacebuilding components of relevant United Nations peacekeeping missions and special political missions, including during mission transitions and drawdown, to support stability and continuity of peacebuilding activities.

Mr Chairman,

7 Special political missions are created primarily through the decision of the Permanent Members in the Security Council. In fact, 34 out of the 35 current missions were created by the Security Council. This includes large field-based missions, which have more in common with peacekeeping operations than traditional special political missions. The current scales of assessment for peacekeeping operations reflect the special responsibilities of the Permanent Members of the Security Council. It is not unreasonable to expect those who hold immense influence over special political missions to shoulder a larger responsibility for their funding. Such an arrangement would create more equal distribution of responsibility and power among member states.

8 Mr Chairman, let me conclude by reiterating ASEAN's continued commitment to increasing the effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of special political missions. We look forward to discussing all proposed measures on funding and backstopping of special political missions, and addressing these issues in the context of the Secretary-General's ongoing reform efforts.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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