

**SPEECH BY H.E. LE LUONG MINH, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ASEAN,  
AT THE REGIONAL SEMINAR: MAINTAINING A SOUTHEAST ASIA  
REGION FREE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

*12 February 2013, Jakarta*

***Excellency, Mr. Chairman,***

***Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

1. First of all, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia for organizing and inviting me to participate in this important regional seminar – a testimony to the unwavering commitment by all Southeast Asian countries to preserve this region free of nuclear weapons. As rightly put in the statement of its purpose, this seminar presents a good opportunity for us to reinvigorate the linkage and synergy between our regional efforts and the global non-proliferation regime. The realization of a Southeast Asian nuclear weapon-free zone can only be achieved when nations in the region participate effectively in a wide spectrum of international instruments and frameworks on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear security.

2. With that in mind, I would like to focus on the nexus between the global non-proliferation regime, of which the IAEA safeguards system is an indispensable part, and the collective efforts by ASEAN Member States under the SEANWFZ Treaty. I will also highlight the need to strengthen cooperation between the IAEA and ASEAN/ASEAN Member States on important nuclear-related issues.

***Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen***

**The Importance of IAEA safeguards system in the global nuclear landscape**

3. The global nuclear landscape is getting more complex and less predictable in which the actors are no longer limited to States only; and the concerns are not only nuclear warfare but also nuclear terrorism and nuclear safety, among others; nuclear technology has become more accessible and the need to use nuclear technology for development purposes all the more pressing. The current nuclear regime is multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered, encompassing numerous global and regional frameworks for

non-proliferation, disarmament, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, nuclear safety and nuclear security. All these aspects interface with each other in a dynamic relationship. At the centre of this regime is the IAEA whose standards, expertise and collaboration with its Member States and partners worldwide have contributed greatly to safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear technologies.

4. The IAEA safeguards system is an indispensable instrument in nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful nuclear cooperation, as recognized in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Statute of the IAEA and other treaties against the spread of nuclear weapons. The verification role of the safeguards system, strengthened with the Additional Protocol – aimed at granting IAEA complementary inspection authority - provides assurances about the non-diversion of declared nuclear materials as well as the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in a State. It has significantly enhanced nuclear transparency and strategic trust among States, thereby contributing to regional and international security. The safeguards agreements also open access to IAEA assistance for the development of a national nuclear security framework, reducing the risk of nuclear and other radioactive materials being used in malicious acts.

5. Concluding IAEA safeguards agreements is an obligation upon the States Parties to various nuclear weapon-free zones (NWFZs) such as the Tlateloco Treaty, the Rarotonga Treaty, the Pelindaba Treaty, and the SEANWFZ Treaty. The fact that these zonal treaties recognise the IAEA safeguards agreements as an essential verification tool of peaceful uses of nuclear technology has significantly complemented and augmented the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, providing an additional layer of assurance against the diversion of nuclear techniques and technologies to the development of nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices.

### ***Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen***

### **The linkage between the SEANWFZ Treaty and the IAEA Safeguards**

6. By signing the SEANWFZ Treaty in December 1995, the ASEAN Member States committed themselves to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in the region. This commitment was further reaffirmed with the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter which has, as one of its goals, the preservation of Southeast Asia as a zone free of nuclear weapons and free of

all other weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, as States Parties to the NPT and the SEANWFZ Treaty, ASEAN Member States pursue nuclear non-proliferation in the world in general and in Southeast Asia in particular.

7. The SEANWFZ Treaty is the most important regional treaty on non-proliferation in Southeast Asia – a strategic instrument for peace and security in the region, and a key contribution to the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The IAEA safeguards are featured prominently in various provisions of the Treaty. Under Article 4(d), States Parties undertake to support the continued effectiveness of the international non-proliferation system based on the NPT and the IAEA safeguards system. Article 5 requires States Parties to conclude an agreement with the IAEA for the application of full scope safeguards to its peaceful nuclear activities, if they have not done so. And last but not least, the IAEA safeguards system constitutes a key component of the Control System to be established for the purpose of verifying compliance with the SEANWFZ Treaty (Article 10). All these provisions manifest a strong correlation between compliance with the IAEA safeguards system and the effective implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty.

8. The IAEA safeguards agreements and the Additional Protocols are also featured in the Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty (2007-2012). ASEAN is currently working on the revised Plan of Action (PoA) for the period 2013-2017 with a stronger emphasis on action-oriented measures. It is envisaged that the revised PoA will continue to encourage all States Parties to conclude with the IAEA additional protocols.

9. To date, all States Parties to the SEANWFZ Treaty have concluded Safeguards Agreements with the IAEA, with six of them having signed the Additional Protocols. For four of these, the Additional Protocols have entered into force, and for two, their ratification remains pending. Most of these States Parties are either pursuing or considering the development of nuclear energy programmes at varying degrees of commitment and readiness, making their conclusion of Additional Protocols with the IAEA all the more significant.

***Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

**The way forward: Enhancing Cooperation with the IAEA**

10. The SEANWFZ Treaty provides a legal basis for cooperation with the IAEA both at the national level with individual States Parties and at the regional level under the SEANWFZ institutional framework. Article 18 of the SEANWFZ Treaty provides that the SEANWFZ Commission may conclude agreements with the IAEA to facilitate the efficient operation of the control system established by the Treaty. The only ASEAN Member State that is yet to be a member of the IAEA, is taking steps towards IAEA membership. These are favorable conditions for the consideration of a possible formal arrangement of cooperation between ASEAN and the IAEA in the future.

11. Under the SEANWFZ framework, apart from concluding safeguards agreements, other areas where cooperation and assistance of the IAEA are required include nuclear safety for a peaceful nuclear energy programme, nuclear waste management, and remedial measures. In this regard, ASEAN and the IAEA should have consultations and explore cooperative activities so that IAEA's expertise can be tapped for the effective implementation of relevant provisions in the SEANWFZ Treaty.

12. In addition to the SEANWFZ Treaty, ASEAN has been engaging the IAEA through other mechanisms such as the ASEAN Nuclear Energy Cooperation Sub-Sector Network (NEC-SSN) and the ARF Inter-sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. The Director-General of IAEA also visited the ASEAN Secretariat and met with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) in 2011. This engagement has so far been limited to only briefings and exchange of views. More efforts to explore practical cooperative activities between ASEAN and the IAEA, particularly on the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes can be looked at.

***Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

13. The global cause of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament has regained momentum over the recent years but challenges still abound. There remain increasing concerns about nuclear terrorism, clandestine nuclear programmes and nuclear safety. With SEANWFZ, Southeast Asia remains nuclear weapon-free, but there should be no room for complacency. Besides, while several ASEAN Member States have either decided on or are considering the option of going nuclear to meet their energy needs, they are also facing the challenge of ensuring nuclear safety and security. And, the

Protocol to the Treaty has yet to enter into force pending signatures and ratification by the nuclear weapon states.

14. We should remain seized upon these significant developments to strengthen our collective efforts to address nuclear-related issues. The role of the IAEA remains pivotal and it has become all the more imperative to intensify consultation and cooperation between ASEAN and the IAEA both under the SEANWFZ framework and other mechanisms.

***Thank You!***

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