

**Statement by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations
at the 5th Intersessional CND Meeting of
the 61st Commission on Narcotic Drugs
on 7-9 Nov 2018**

1. I am pleased to speak on behalf of the ten-member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

2. ASEAN is committed to addressing the scourge of drugs. Since declaring our commitment to realise the goal of a Drug-Free ASEAN Community at the 20th ASEAN Summit in 2012, ASEAN Leaders have consistently maintained a zero-tolerance approach to drugs. The most recent reaffirmation by our ASEAN leaders to promote communities free of drug abuse in August 2018¹, is further testament to our shared commitment.

3. As part of the international community, ASEAN has always recognised that the three international drug control conventions are the cornerstone of global drug policy. They represent an established consensus in international drug control, and provide a strong framework for joint action by countries based on a shared common understanding of the world drug problem. More recently, ASEAN contributed constructively to the successful negotiation of the Outcome Document, which also underscores the intent of the three conventions and is aligned to our

¹ Joint Communiqué of The 51st ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Singapore, 2 August 2018

regional aim of securing our communities against the threat and fallout of the abuse of illicit drugs.

4. While we strongly believe that every country has the freedom to decide how best to tackle its own drug problem based on its unique circumstances, it has to be within the framework of the three international drug control conventions. Legalisation of illicit drugs for non-medical and non-scientific use is definitely not within the framework of these three core international drug conventions, and weakens the long-established consensus for drug control.

5. Most worryingly, by legalising illicit drugs, we are sending the wrong signal to our communities that drug use is permissible and existing drug abusers can continue with their drug habits. It contradicts our ongoing efforts in educating our people on the harms and addictiveness of illicit drugs, reduces the effectiveness of our drug rehabilitation programs which aim to wean addicts off drug use, and weakens the resilience of our children and youths against drug experimentation. Such legalisation also emboldens criminals and others to openly market and sell drugs to a wider consumer market, and consequently threatens the public safety and security when crimes are committed under the influence of drugs.

6. Fundamentally, illicit drugs are harmful substances. The removal of legal sanctions that comes with the legalisation of illicit drugs will not solve the drug problem in our region. It will also lead to increased demand for drugs, a rise in other crimes and result in more addicts, including our children, while imposing a heavy cost on individuals, their families, and society at large.

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7. ASEAN's position is clear. We would like to reiterate and reaffirm ASEAN's resolute stand against drugs, including legalisation of illicit drugs, and take preventive measures to keep our children, people and communities safe from drugs. We also urge the international community to uphold the provisions of the international drug control conventions, which we have jointly affirmed as the cornerstone of the international drug control system.

Thank you.