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Speech by H.E. Mr. Valery Mitskevich, Deputy Chairman of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, at the First Plenary Session of the 43rd General Assembly of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) (20-25 November 2022 Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia)

Dear Mr. President,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Let me express my gratitude to the Parliament of the Kingdom of Cambodia and personally to H.E. Heng Samrin, Chairman of the 43rd General Assembly, for organizing and hosting the event. Today, after a forced break, we have an opportunity to return to the in-person discussion of the most urgent and acute problems that have accumulated in recent times.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly. I would like to wish the Assembly success in further building the ASEAN Community on the basis of partnership, solidarity and cooperation for the world in which there will be more opportunities for the happiness and prosperity of everyone in the Southeast Asia.

The founding of the AIPA reflected a great desire of many countries in the region for peace, stability, friendship and cooperation for common development. The ASEAN Community has raised the level of regional ties to the new heights.

The goals and objectives of the Community are clear and understandable to all nations. They are in harmony with the Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the United Nations. The Republic of Belarus strives to adhere to them.

This is a definite plan of mankind for the survival, development and achievement of the well-being and happiness for all on the planet.

However, this plan is crumbling before our eyes. We are all witnesses to how the modern world is rapidly changing.

In this regard, the theme of the 43rd General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly “Investing in Peace, Sustainable Development and Post-COVID-19 Recovery” is more relevant than ever.

The world is struggling to overcome the challenges of a post-pandemic economic recovery. The situation is aggravated by rising costs and dwindling stocks of food, fertilizers, fuel etc. The selfishness of political elites of certain Western countries is

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aimed at creating artificial barriers that impede the normal functioning of supply chains which further exacerbates the situation.

Growing tensions in the world have been boosted by extreme climate events. Drought in some countries has led to crop failure. In particular, the European continent this year faced the worst drought in the last five hundred years. China, Pakistan and the United States have also been severely affected.

The flood was the second devastating natural disaster. In Pakistan, the Philippines and Venezuela, for example, it has claimed lives of many people and caused enormous damage to all livelihoods in those countries.

As a result, humanity is confronted with an acute problem of hunger, which is exacerbated by socio-economic inequalities in various parts of the world.

The United Nations report shows that the number of people suffering from hunger in the world in 2021 reached 828 million, about 46 million more than in 2020 and 150 million more than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

These figures do not bode well for humanity. The world continues to drift away from our shared goal of zero hunger by 2030. The situation would be even worse next year, due to the global food crisis.

Ambition and egoism are splitting the planet, so issues of stability and security are becoming increasingly relevant. There is an objective need to strengthen confidence and reduce tension in relations between countries, to search for sustainable and mutually acceptable solutions to ensure security.

The ASEAN policy based on such principles as solidarity, partnership and peaceful settlement of disputes gets special value in the modern world. The Republic of Belarus is committed to these principles and takes the initiative to resume a broad international dialogue on security issues in the spirit of San Francisco.

As the COVID-19 experience has shown, multilateral cooperation is the only way forward. We have one planet, and despite all our differences, our destinies are connected. No one can feel completely safe if other people live under threat. This applies to the pandemic, and climate change, and the threat of hunger, and the energy and financial crises, and conflicts, as well as other problems that humanity faces today.

Our strength is in solidarity and partnership.

Belarus is ready to interact and co-operate with all countries and regions in addressing the urgent challenges which the humanity faces today. First of all, we

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are talking about ensuring food security and establishing food supplies to countries suffering most from food insecurity, building destroyed housing and rebuilding infrastructure, creating a digital neighborhood belt and establishing common secure digital ecosystems. We are open for cooperation in economic, environmental, innovative, medical and other areas. Belarus stands for the promotion of any good, peaceful initiatives aimed at sustainable development and the well-being of mankind. Our planet needs peace, partnership and solidarity for a common future. Belarusian parliamentarians are making every effort in this direction.

During the Dialogue with Observer parliaments we intend to discuss issues of establishing substantive bilateral cooperation with AIPA member countries. I am confident that further development of the dialogue between Belarus and ASEAN is in the common interests and will bring positive results.

I believe that the main thing is goodwill and growing mutual interest in expanding and deepening relationship on the principles of justice and equity. This is what responds to the interests of our countries and people!

I wish everyone fruitful work.

Thank you for your attention.