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QUESTION OF PEACE, STABILITY AND CO-OPERATION  
IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Letter dated 29 September 1981 from the Permanent Representative  
of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations  
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose the text of the memorandum from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic concerning the principles governing relations of peaceful coexistence between the countries of Indo-China and the ASEAN countries, for peace, stability, friendship and co-operation in South-East Asia.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the text of this letter and the enclosure to be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 34.

(Signed) Vithaya SOURINHO  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

MEMORANDUM FROM THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

PRINCIPLES GOVERNING RELATIONS OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE  
BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES OF INDO-CHINA AND THE ASEAN  
COUNTRIES, FOR PEACE, STABILITY, FRIENDSHIP AND  
CO-OPERATION IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Over the last 40 years, South-East Asia has never known peace and stability. The potentially explosive tension now constitutes a threat to the peace and stability of the region and a source of concern for a large number of countries in the world.

Since the end of the second Indochinese war in 1975, the countries in this region, and particularly the countries of Indo-China and the ASEAN countries, have made various attempts to promote relations of friendship and co-operation on the basis of the principle of peaceful coexistence between States with different political and social régimes. This is the positive side of development, which reflects the aspirations of the peoples of the countries of the region and the interests of peace and stability in South-East Asia and in the world.

Nevertheless, there still exists between the two groups of countries a number of divergences regarding the underlying cause of the potentially explosive tension in South-East Asia and the ways of eliminating it. For this reason, only continuation of the dialogue between the two groups of countries will make it possible to promote mutual understanding and trust, to eliminate such divergences and to seek together means of settlement to remove the causes of the threat to the States' independence and sovereignty and in general to the peace and stability of the region.

Such an approach is in line with the Final Declaration adopted at the Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries held in New Delhi in February 1981, which urged "all States in the region to undertake a dialogue which would lead to the resolution of differences among themselves and the establishment of durable peace and stability in the area as well as the elimination of involvement and threats of intervention of outside Powers".

With a view to achieving this objective of peace, stability, friendship and co-operation in South-East Asia, it is the duty of the countries of Indo-China and the ASEAN countries to reach agreement on the following principles:

1. Respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of each country, non-aggression, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence between the countries of Indo-China and the ASEAN countries, for peace, stability, friendship and co-operation in South-East Asia.

Respect for the rights of the people of each country to choose and develop freely their political, social, economic and cultural system; to determine freely their domestic and foreign policy position in accordance with the objectives and principles of non-alignment and of the United Nations Charter; non-imposition of the will of one party on the other.

The domestic and foreign affairs of each country in the Indo-China and ASEAN groups should be controlled by the people concerned and no country should have the right to interfere in those affairs individually or collectively, directly or indirectly.

2. Settlement of questions in dispute and differences in relations between the countries of Indo-China and the ASEAN countries, as well as between the other countries in the region, by peaceful means through negotiation and in the spirit of settlement of all the problems of South-East Asia by the countries of the region in accordance with the principles of equality, friendship, mutual respect, understanding and regard for the legitimate interests of each, by mutual agreement, and without imposition of the will of one party on the other, without external interference and without the use or threat of use of force in their relations.

Respect for the right of each country in Indo-China and ASEAN, as well as of other countries in South-East Asia, to individual or collective self-defence in accordance with the principles of non-alignment and of the Charter of the United Nations; no country should be allowed to use collective defence treaties to serve its particular interests and oppose other countries in the region.

3. Continuation and development of bilateral and multilateral co-operation in economic, technical and scientific, cultural, sporting and tourist matters between the countries of Indo-China and the ASEAN countries, as well as with other countries in South-East Asia, on the basis of the principles of equality and mutual benefit, with a view to strengthening mutual understanding and trust and friendly and good-neighbourly relations, in the interest of the task of building up each country in accordance with its individual conditions.

The countries of the region concerned should co-operate in the exploitation of the Mekong with a view to the development of their respective economies and the general prosperity of the region.

4. Respect for the sovereignty of the coastal countries of the South China Sea over their territorial waters and their sovereign rights to their exclusive economic zone and their continental shelf.

Granting of favourable conditions to the land-locked countries of the region as regards transit to and from the sea and provision to those countries of shipping rights and benefits in accordance with international practice and law.

Settlement through negotiation of differences concerning maritime zones and islands between the coastal countries of the South China Sea. Pending a solution,

the parties concerned undertake to do nothing which might aggravate existing differences. The countries of the region should join together to seek arrangements for co-operation among themselves and with other countries inside and outside the region, in the exploitation of the resources of the sea-bed and ocean floor on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit; preservation of the marine environment against pollution; protection of international communications and freedom of sea and air navigation in the region of the South China Sea.

5. The countries outside the region must respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of the region. There must be an end to all forms of pressure and threat from outside, creating a situation of tension and hostility between the countries of the region.

The countries of the region should not allow any country to use their territories as a base for aggression and direct or indirect interference aimed at the others.

They declare themselves ready to co-operate with the other countries outside the region and with international organizations and to accept their politically untied assistance.

Under no circumstances should bilateral or multilateral co-operation between the countries of Indo-China, the ASEAN countries or the other countries in the region and countries outside the region, jeopardize the security and the interests of other countries of the region or be directed against any third country.

6. With a view to the effective application of the above-mentioned principles, a standing organ should be established to be responsible for dialogue and consultations between the countries of Indo-China and the ASEAN countries, with the possible participation of Burma. The membership of this organ, to be decided by mutual agreement, could include one or more representatives of each group (on a 1-1 or 2-2 basis) and it could meet annually in order to solve the various problems raised concerning relations between the members of the two groups or could hold an extraordinary session in the event of an emergency or crisis.

7. The above-mentioned principles would provide a basis for dialogue and ongoing consultations, which will aim at the conclusion of an agreement or other form of commitment between the countries of Indo-China and the ASEAN countries, which are prepared to invite the other country in the region to participate.

VIENTIANE, 28 September 1981