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TEXT OF STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR TONY KOH, SINGAPORE'S
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS - NEW YORK
AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON FEBRUARY 26, 1979

The peace, security and stability of the region of South-East Asia, indeed, of the world, is being threatened by the armed conflicts between Democratic Kampuchea and Vietnam and between China and Vietnam. The two wars have already inflicted death and destruction and untold suffering on the civilian populations of the countries involved. Unless arrested, these wars will not only escalate in intensity but also threaten to involve other powers in the conflict. It is for these reasons that my Government has given its support to efforts to convene an urgent meeting of the Security Council.

Mr President, there are two armed conflicts taking place concurrently. The first is the armed conflict taking place in the territory of Democratic Kampuchea between Vietnamese forces and forces loyal to the Government of Democratic Kampuchea. The second is the armed conflict taking place in the territory of Vietnam between Chinese and Vietnamese forces. The two conflicts are, in our view, related. The conflict between China and Vietnam is, at least in part, a product of Vietnam's armed intervention against and occupation of Democratic Kampuchea.

Mr President, at the outset, I would like to state the principles which govern our approach. First, I wish to recall that all member states of the United Nations are under an obligation to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force. Second, they are under an obligation to settle their disputes by peaceful means. Third, they are obliged to respect the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. The wars in Kampuchea and Vietnam have arisen because the parties concerned have violated some or all of these principles.

Mr President2/-

Mr President, I turn first to the armed conflict taking place in the northern part of Vietnam between Chinese and Vietnamese forces. The armed conflict began on February 17, 1979. In a statement issued by the Xinhua News Agency (S/13094) on the same day, the Chinese Government explained that its military operation against Vietnam was a counter-attack against numerous incidents of armed provocations and the killing of Chinese frontier guards and inhabitants by the Vietnamese. The Chinese Government stated that it did not want a single inch of Vietnamese territory and that after counter-attacking the Vietnamese, the Chinese forces will withdraw to the Chinese side of the border. In his note of February 17, 1979 (S/13095), addressed to the President of the Security Council, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Mr Nguyen Duy Trinh, accused the Chinese of waging a war of aggression against Vietnam.

Mr President, it is difficult to ascertain the truth of the allegations and counter-allegations by China and Vietnam concerning various incidents along their border. Whatever the truth of the matter and the merits of the case may be, they do not, in the view of my Government, justify the action of the Government of the People's Republic of China in launching a military attack against Vietnam. If the Vietnamese have perpetrated the border incursions and have killed Chinese frontier guards and other inhabitants, as alleged by China, the proper thing would have been for China to bring its complaint to the Security Council. China should not have taken the law into its own hands. If countries, especially those which are big and militarily powerful, were to take the law into their own hands and to mete out punishment to other nations, then the world is not safe for small and militarily weak countries. For these reasons, we cannot support the Chinese action which violates the principles of international law and of the United Nations Charter. In line with the Asean statement of February 20, 1979 (S/13106), we call for an immediate cessation of hostilities. We call upon China to withdraw its forces from the territory of Vietnam. We call upon the Governments of China and Vietnam to enter into negotiations in order to settle their differences peacefully. In this respect, we commend the offer

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of his good offices by our Secretary-General, Dr Kurt Waldheim, to the Governments of China and Vietnam. Finally, we appeal to powers outside the region to exercise restraint and not to escalate the present conflict.

I shall turn next to examine the situation in Democratic Kampuchea. When I spoke to the Security Council on January 13, I said the evidence was irrefutable that the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam had sent its armed forces across an international border into Democratic Kampuchea and had intervened in the internal affairs of that country. I deplored the armed intervention by Vietnam in the internal affairs of Democratic Kampuchea which violated its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. I urged the Council to reaffirm the sovereign right of the people of Democratic Kampuchea to determine their future by themselves free from interference from outside powers. I also urged the Council to call for the immediate and total withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from the territory of Democratic Kampuchea.

More than a month has passed since I spoke to the Council. Has the situation changed for the better? Has Vietnam withdrawn or begun to withdraw its forces from Democratic Kampuchea? Mr President, the answers to both questions are unfortunately in the negative. Vietnam has not withdrawn its armed forces from Democratic Kampuchea. On the contrary, there is evidence to suggest that Vietnam has introduced additional troops into Democratic Kampuchea. Hostilities between the forces of Vietnam and Democratic Kampuchea continue and are taking place in various parts of the country. In addition, the Government of Vietnam concluded a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation on February 18, 1979, with the Government of the so-called People's Republic of Kampuchea. This shows that Vietnam intends to perpetuate its occupation of Kampuchea and is using the treaty as a means of legitimising its military presence there. The conclusion is therefore inescapable that Democratic Kampuchea continues to be a country occupied by the Vietnamese Army and that the so-called Government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea headed by Hong Samrin is a Government imposed by the Vietnamese on the people of Democratic Kampuchea.

Mr President, the issue in Democratic Kampuchea is clear. Vietnam has no right to send its armed forces into Democratic Kampuchea and to impose a regime on that country. The Security Council must therefore renew its demand for the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Democratic Kampuchea. Let the people of that country choose their own Government. Let Kampuchea regain its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Let it live in peace and in amity with all its neighbours. If these objectives can be achieved by convening a new international conference on Kampuchea, my Government will support such an initiative.

Mr President, the peace, security and stability of the region of South-East Asia is being threatened by an intensifying rivalry between two of the great powers. This rivalry has fanned the flames of war in both Kampuchea and Vietnam. Unless checked, the flames of war could spread to other areas. We, who live in the region of South-East Asia, must resist this danger. We must not allow ourselves to become pawns in the rivalry between the great powers. We should learn to live with one another, in peace and in amity. If we have differences let us settle our differences by peaceful means, not by resort to force. Let us together make of South-East Asia, a zone of peace, of freedom and of neutrality.

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