

Myanmar

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Statement by

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**at the
Fifth Special Session of the Human Rights Council**

**on the
"Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar"**

Geneva, 2 October 2007

Mr. President,

1. At the outset, I should like to briefly touch upon the background of the present situation in Myanmar. Myanmar regained its independence in 1948. After independence, Myanmar had to face over forty years of insurgency. It is only under the present Government, which has pursued a policy of national reconciliation, that all 18 national armed groups returned to the legal fold except Kayin National Union (KNU). This constitutes an unprecedented political achievement in the process of national reconciliation.

2. Myanmar is a multi-ethnic country comprising over 100 ethnic nationalities. Drafting enduring Constitution for all ethnic nationalities, workers and peasants is very crucial for the Government of Myanmar. The Government, therefore, convened the National Convention to consider basic principles of new Constitution in 1993 with the participation of all ethnic nationalities, all political parties including National League for Democracy (NLD). However, in 1995, the NLD boycotted the process and withdrew its participation. The Convention had to be adjourned till 2004.

3. On 30 August 2003, the Government of Myanmar adopted a seven-step road map for transition to democracy. Since then, the Government has been implementing the road map for its smooth transition to democracy. The first crucial step of the road map was the reconvening of the National Convention. The fifth and final session of the National Convention was successfully concluded on 3 September 2007 which adopted basic principles of the new Constitution. Then a new Constitution will be drafted based on these adopted principles. Thereafter, the draft Constitution will be presented to the people in a nation-wide referendum. Subsequently, free and fair election will be held. Therefore,

the process of transformation of the country into a democratic State is moving ahead step by step in accordance with road map.

4. However, internal and external destructive elements who do not wish to see the completion of the National Convention took advantage of the increase of fuel price to exploit the situation politically. In this connection, they had initiated the protest in Yangon, Mandalay, Sittwe and Pakoku and persuaded the Buddhist monks to join their protest.

Mr. President,

5. Protests against incumbent governments may take place in any country and in fact they did in the past, they are doing now and they will do in future too.

6. Myanmar's situation is very complex and the protests taking place now are not simple protests reflective of grievances. To view them in that light will constitute naivety at its height. There are various motivations of protests and they differ from one situation to another.

7. As all are well aware, Myanmar is a country under heavy political pressure from some western countries. There has already been an attempt at the UN Security Council to deal with the Myanmar situation. There have been publicly avowed threats by them to exert more pressure on Myanmar once the right opportunity arises.

8. The present protests in Myanmar must be looked at against that backdrop. The present protests do take place at a time when the Government has been making concrete progress with the recent completion of the National Convention in its process of road map. The objective of the protests apparently is to create a situation which will eventually escalate to a mass rally on a scale of 1988 unrest so that there will be valid justification for outside intervention without incurring the wrath of the international community.

9. The Government has firm evidence that these protests were being helped both financially and materially by internal and external anti-government elements. Knowing that Myanmar is a strong Buddhist country, these elements seized these protests led by student monks as an opportunity to corner the Myanmar Government, knowing full well that it is extremely difficult for the Government to deal with the monks-led protests if they get out of control.

10. The protests are the long-awaited chance for some western countries to initiate an action to intervene in the country. As is well known, when these protests broke out, the Government did not stop them, hoping they will end up peacefully. However, as the protests unfolded, they were used to aggravate the situation.

11. Regrettably, the international media, being powerful with their most effective audio and visual images, blew the situation out of proportion, inflating the number of protesting monks and laymen and highlighting the incident above all other more important and pressing problems of the world.

12. At the same time, some western countries jumped on the bandwagon of attacks on Myanmar, using even the UN General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council. As a matter of fact, protests became gradually more violent, defiant and even provocative with the encouragement of anti-government elements.

13. The Government cannot accept the situation getting out of control and affecting the general population unnecessarily. The Government exercised utmost restraint and was very careful in dealing with the situation. Curfew was issued in locations where they are really necessary to ensure peace and stability of the State.

14. To our dismay, the international media and certain western countries used the situation as pretexts to paint the Government in the image of a callous and repressive government, unwittingly inciting more violence inside the country, at the same time pushing the protests in the direction of large-scale rally. That large-scale rally will constitute a strong justification for intervention.

15. The Government is determined to bring the situation back to normal as quickly as possible in the most peaceful manner, exercising utmost restraint. As all are aware, things have calmed down. We are able to bring normalization to the situation.

Mr. President,

16. I also wish to inform that to date people in 11 townships have convened mass rallies in support of the successful conclusion of the National Convention. Townships all over the country are expected to hold similar rallies.

Mr. President,

17. The Myanmar Government is fully aware of its responsibility to lead the nation in the process of transformation to a disciplined democracy. We have laid down a road map and will work conscientiously to achieve our goals. Significant progress has already been made. The process can be successfully completed, sooner rather than later, if no obstacles are placed in our path. In this regard, the international community can best help Myanmar by showing greater understanding. They can begin by refraining from measures which would result in adding fuel to the fire.

Mr. President,

18. Cooperation with the United Nations is a cornerstone of Myanmar's Foreign Policy. It is in this spirit, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the United Nations has visited Myanmar and he was well received by the Acting Prime Minister, Secretary (1) of the State Peace and Development Council. He also met with the spokespersons of the State Peace and Development Council headed by the Minister for Information. They briefed him the current situation in Myanmar. Mr. Gambari also had already met with those he requested to meet, including Heads of the United Nations Agencies and Diplomatic Missions based in Yangon separately. He is presently in Myanmar. We will continue to work closely and cooperate with the United Nations.

I thank you Mr. President.