



# MYANMAR

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## **58<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

Statement by His Excellency Dr. Kyaw Win

Ambassador

Representative of the Union of Myanmar in the Third Committee

on

**Agenda Item 117(a) & (d): Human Rights questions :**

Implementation of human rights instruments &

Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the

Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

New York: November 7, 2003

Mr. Chairman,

The Union of Myanmar has consistently maintained over the years its long standing policy of close cooperation with the United Nations. Since her independence in 1948, up to this day official records will testify that cooperation in the area of human rights has been no exception. Whether they be cooperation with the UN Commission on Human Rights, the International Labour Organization, thematic working groups or special rapporteurs, Myanmar has done its level best to provide necessary information and accepted visits of UN envoys, allowed establishment of UN Offices, extended full facilities to visiting high level teams as well as invitations to high UN officials.

Such displays of cooperation should leave no doubt that Myanmar is fully committed to the principles enshrined in the charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Mr. Chairman,

In 1988, because of the rapidly deteriorating political situation, the present Government of Myanmar was compelled to assume state power in order to save the country from the brink of absolute anarchism and disintegration of the Union. From that time onwards,

being convinced that fighting hunger and poverty are priorities in promoting human rights the Government has continuously strived to fulfill the fundamental rights of its people to essential basic needs such as sufficiency of food, clothing, shelter, education, health care and to promote social progress of the nation.

On the other hand, being aware that much of the allegations of human rights violations were originating from areas where armed insurgencies have been raging for some forty years, the government made it a priority to patiently and painstakingly negotiate and secure cease-fire agreements with over 90% of armed ethnic groups.

In fact, this was a feat commended by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Professor Pinheiro in the report, submitted after his third mission to Myanmar, to the UN Human Rights Commission.

As if to prove this policy right, the current allegations of human rights violations are now emanating only from areas where faltering armed insurgencies have, in desperation, been resorting to negative propaganda campaigns in collusion with their mentors from abroad, but no longer from the areas where peace has been restored.

It may thus be appropriate at this stage to quote the report of this year's UN High commissioner for Human Rights that " The Universal

Declaration of Human Rights further spells out the link between human rights and peace". Conversely, it may be inferred that in 95% of the countryside where peace has been restored for the past decade, mechanisms to promote and protect human rights have been reinstated with the resultant cessation of the allegations concerning human rights violations.

More importantly, in all parts of the country where peace and stability now prevail significant achievements are now clearly visible in terms of human development. In order to facilitate agricultural output, energy generation and transportation- one hundred and thirty six new dams, thirty two power plants generating additional hundreds of megawatts, one hundred and forty five new bridges, including nine large scale bridges across major rivers, four thousand two hundred and thirty additional miles of roads, and one thousand more miles of rail roads have been built, not to mention a new container deep sea terminal , a new and modern international airport for the second largest city of Mandalay and dozens of domestic airports have been improved and modernized . This restoration of the right to human development after achievement of peace unfortunately has received little recognition from the international community so far.

Mr. Chairman,

Decades of armed conflicts and guerilla warfare have not only left many rural parts of the country devastated and under developed- but also remained uninformed on the fundamental principles of human rights. With the objective to improve this situation, a 20-member Human Rights Committee chaired by the Minister for Home Affairs was formed in April 2000. With the cooperation and assistance of the Australian Government and some non-governmental and private organizations, the Committee has held a series of human rights workshops with the aim to disseminate information of human rights standards among all public officials and also to a greater range of citizens of the Union.

In the past two years, a series of international seminars pertaining to Rights of the Child, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as Mine Awareness workshops, general human rights workshops for law enforcement personnel have been held with the participations of international experts in the field.

Although time will not permit me to enumerate all the developments in the health and education sectors, the Government has indeed devoted so much effort and resources to control major epidemic diseases including the HIV/ AIDS problem which at one stage unfortunately became highly politicized as if, the country was in a state of denial.

It should, however, be noted that sanctions and negative economic measures imposed by certain western powers have not been helpful in the control of epidemic and endemic diseases afflicting the populations whose rights of access to treatment facilities have been unfairly denied, in addition to being denied of their right to development. Recently loss of jobs for hundreds of thousands of young factory workers, mostly women, took place as a result of sanctions imposed by some developed western countries.

A similar situation unfortunately exists in the narcotic drug control sector where the Myanmar Government has achieved significant successes, thanks to the cooperative assistance from neighbouring countries of Asia and the United Nations, but remaining unaided by the biggest drug consumer countries of the west. However, Myanmar's unstinting drug eradication efforts have resulted in substantial decline in output of the opium poppy crop for the third consecutive year. According to US Government imagery-based estimates in the 2002-2003 growing season, there has been a 39 percent decline from the previous year and it was admitted that weather was not a major factor accelerating a drop in cultivating levels.

Mr. Chairman,

Myanmar is fully cognizant of its responsibilities as a state party to various human rights conventions such as Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the 1977 Protocols, Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Woman, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is cooperating fully with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has established itself in many parts of the country and carrying out its humanitarian activities.

Mr. Chairman,

Turning to religious freedom in the country, Religious Affairs Ministry of the Government grants financial aid to all religious communities and coordinates the attendance of State leaders to important ceremonies of all faiths. It also makes necessary arrangements for pilgrims, such as those wishing to travel for their Haj pilgrimages. The Government, however, would firmly handle within the framework of law, any attempt to instigate inter-community hatred for the purpose of creating political unrest. It has consistently protected all minority religions from discrimination and prevented the exploitation of religious differences for political purposes.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of the Union of Myanmar has from the outset pledged to bring about an evolution toward a multi-party democratic system but only under conditions of peace and stability so that the more basic rights of the silent majority do not become compromised as a result of political turmoil and anarchism that the nation bitterly experienced in 1988. However, the Government is now able to take steps to revive the National Convention process with a view to draft a firm and enduring constitution with the participation of all strata of Myanmar society.

In this regard, the new Prime Minister has recently taken charge of the process and a "Seven step Road Map to Democracy" has been laid out to create a new political landscape where all political parties can play the political game on a level playing field.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, may I stress that this endeavor has already gained the support of our regional partners and well-meaning neighbours with a better understanding of Myanmar's complex political situation.

In order that this transition process can continue to make progress without hindrance, we sincerely hope that the international community will give due recognition to the positive developments in Myanmar and encourage the process without undue interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign member state.

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