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# MYANMAR

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**Sixth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
18 May 2007**

**Statement by Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun , Counsellor,  
Permanent Mission of Myanmar to the United Nations**

**Item (4): Implementation of recommendations on the six mandated areas and  
on Millennium Development Goals**

Madam Chairperson,

My delegation would like to extend our congratulations to you on your re-election and wishes to express our appreciation to you and other members of the Bureau for your dedicated service to the cause of indigenous people.

Madam Chairperson,

We are now well into the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People which commences from 1 January 2005. We support the goals of the Second Decade, which is to further strengthen international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by indigenous people in such areas as culture, education, health, human rights, the environment and social and economic development, by means of action-oriented programmes and specific projects, increased technical assistance and relevant standard-setting activities. My delegation is also pleased to note that there is an increased involvement of Member States, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations on indigenous issues.

Madam Chairperson,

Indigenous issues in Myanmar are regarded as National issues. Myanmar is a nation of 54 million people, made up of 8 main national races comprising over 100 ethnic groups. Among the national races of Myanmar, there were neither early settlers nor late settlers. All

of us have been living together in weal and woe throughout the ages and we all are indigenous to the soil. Therefore, the indigenous people in Myanmar are referred to as national races.

I will now focus on economic and social development with emphasis on environment, health and education. Environment occupies an important part of Myanmar's national policies. Following the Earth Summit in 1992 we adopted the National Environmental Policy of Myanmar and based on that policy we published Myanmar Agenda.21 in 1997. Myanmar Agenda.21 attempts to be comprehensive in its coverage of all areas of sustainable development. It contains policies and programme areas related to three broad dimensions of sustainable development, namely social, economic and environmental dimensions. Local communities, the population and non-governmental organizations have a vital role in the identification of general as well as environmental issues.

Myanmar is renowned for her wealth of forests and biodiversity. The diverse forest ecosystem of ours is home to thousands of plants and animal species. This ecosystem is crucial for our ethnic populations, providing them with numerous forest products that are essential for their livelihood and sustainability. Customary rights are acknowledged and wide access is given to the local populace to the use of forest resources. Opportunity is also given to the local populace and NGOs to participate in the conservation and management of the biodiversity of our forests. For sustainable management of forest, we adopted the Forest Law in 1992, Forest Policy in 1995 and the Protection of Wild Life and Wild Plants and Conservation of Natural Areas Law in 1994. Community Forestry Instructions (CFI) which contains provisions to respect the knowledge and innovation of practices of local community has been in place since 1995. The objective is two-fold: (1) To encourage local communities to establish forest plantations by using their traditional knowledge and experience; and, (2) to encourage the participation of local communities in managing forests to meet their basic needs while conserving the forest ecosystem.

Madam Chairperson,

Since independence, Myanmar has had to face numerous insurgencies. However, that is now totally changed. Out of 18 major insurgent groups, 17 have come back to the legal fold. There is now only a small fraction of one insurgent group who are still in insurgency against the Union. Because peace and stability had returned to the border areas where some 20% of the national races reside, the Government is able to implement development programme in these border areas to bridge the development gap between the national races in the border areas and those residing in the rest of the country.

The Central Committee for Development of Border Areas and National Races has been formed with the Head of State as its Chairman. A separate Ministry has also been established, since 1994, to carry out tasks with the supervision, coordination and cooperation of the Central Committee. In order to promote the well-being of the national races, the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development and other related Ministries have been implementing the 3 national development programmes, namely, the border areas development programme, the 24 special development zones programme, and the Integrated Rural Development Plan. The Government has expended considerable financial resources to fund the development programme, which cover the education, health, agriculture and other social development areas. These efforts have paid off.

The Government has given priority to construction of roads and bridges in border areas and has spent over K 51,994 million in constructing roads and bridges since 1989. So far, the Government has constructed 3,436 miles of earth road, 2,301 miles of gravel road, 394 miles of tarred road, 76 large bridges, 995 small bridges and 41 suspension bridges and has maintained 3,396 miles of road. All-weather roads have been built to link border areas and inland areas and it could lead to strengthening of friendship among national races and boosting of trade in the areas.

Regarding human resources development in border areas, the Government has built 852 primary schools, 90 middle schools and 92 high schools in rural areas. Additionally, the Government has worked together with UNDP for the development projects for far-flung areas, and a total of 507 schools have been built and 598 have been renovated in Kachin, Kayin, Mon and Rakhine States. The number of students in border areas has increased from over 1,500 in the past to 185,552.

Madam Chairperson,

We have also been able to improve the health services provided to the national races and the border areas where as there were only 6 hospitals in 1988 there are now 79 hospitals, 105 dispensaries, 58 rural health care centers and 140 health care branches. All in all, the Government has invested over 65 billions Kyats and more than US \$ 550 million of our own resources for the development of the national races residing in the border areas. By implementing a national reconciliation process which has resulted in a virtual end to the nearly 50 years of insurgency , and implementing integrated development programme for the inhabitants, the Government was able to promote significant wellbeing and the human rights of our national races.

While the economic, social and cultural conditions of our national races are being promoted, they are not left out in the nation's political process either. The representatives of all our national races are actively participating in the ongoing National Convention, which is working towards the fulfillment of the aspirations of the people for a democratic nation.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.

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