

Myanmar

Permanent Mission of the Union of Myanmar

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STATEMENT

BY

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AND MEMBER OF THE MYANMAR OBSERVER DELEGATION

AT THE

TWELFTH SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP ON
INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

ITEM 5: REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS

(28 JULY 1994)

WGIP 94 GOV/SEA. MMR/1

Madam Chairperson,

It gives me great pleasure to see you once again in the chair of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations at its Twelfth Session. Your contribution to the work of this Working Group during your tenure as its Chairperson/Rapporteur for the past one decade is indeed both considerable and commendable. The final draft text of the Declaration on Indigenous Populations completed by this Working Group bears the distinctive marks of your substantive contribution.

Madam Chairperson,

The eight national races, namely, Bamars (Burman), Shans, Kayins (Karens), Rakhines (Arakanese), Mons, Chins, Kachins and Kayahs (Karrennis) and 135 national racial groups, residing in Myanmar, are all indigenous. There are no distinct early comers and late comer colonizers among our national races. All our national brethren have lived together in our motherland in unity and harmony through weal and woe throughout our history since time immemorial. As such, no single race in my country can claim a monopoly of indigenous origin. Bamars are as much indigenous as Shans, Kayins, Rakhines, Mons, Chins, Kachins and Kayahs are. No more and no less. This unique characteristic of the racial homogeneity and harmony of the Union of Myanmar is indeed by now well known to the world.

Madam Chairperson,

We subscribe to, and attach utmost importance to the right to development. One of the legacies that the colonialists bequeathed to us on our regaining of independence in 1948 was the neglected state of the economic development of border areas. There existed a considerable gap between the level of socio-economic advancement of those areas and that of the rest of the country. With a view to bridging this gap, the State Law and Order Restoration Council has been carrying out, as a priority national task, the programme for the development of border areas and national races since March 1989. Never before in our post-independence history had there been any programme for the development of border areas on such a scale, implemented with such vigour and such tangible results. From March 1989 to-date, the State Law and Order Restoration Council has spent a total of Kyats 1.832 billion (approximately US \$ 300 million) for the development of border areas and national races - more than any other single programme or project. Undoubtedly, these measures taken by the Government will go a long way in improving the quality of the life of national races in border areas, and in raising the level of their socio-economic development to that of other areas of the country.

Madam Chairperson,

It is our conviction, reinforced by our long experience, that the development of border areas and the eradication of drug menace in those regions are complementary

and mutually supportive, and should, therefore, go hand in hand. Accordingly, another top priority campaign carried out by the Government in parallel with the programme for the development of border areas is our national campaign to combat the menace of illicit drugs. As a matter of fact, our national activities of combatting the menace of illicit drugs have reached an apex in the 1990s after the advent of the State Law and Order Restoration Council. From 1990 to-date, the Government has carried out eight public destructions of narcotic drugs seized by the law enforcement agencies. Moreover, during the same period, local people in border areas have voluntarily carried out twelve on-site destructions of narcotic drugs and opium-refining paraphernalia, seized from drug traffickers and insurgents. In fact, our dedication and commitment to the cause of combatting the drug menace is much more than that, and goes to the extent of sacrificing the life of our dear sons. My country has sacrificed to-date the life of no less than 305 members of the Myanmar Armed Forces in the military operations to interdict drug traffickers. And no less than 929 members of the Armed Forces had sustained injuries in those encounters. In so doing, the Myanmar Government is not only carrying out its national duty; it is indeed fulfilling its internationalist duty, as well, to contribute to the success of the global war against the menace of illicit drugs.

Madam Chairperson,

The effective measures taken by the Government for the development of border areas and national races, and for

the eradication of the menace of illicit drugs have won not only the hearts and minds of the local populace, but also that of the armed groups.

Now, for the first time in our post independence history, no less than eleven armed groups have returned to the legal fold to-date, and have joined hands with the Government in the development of their regions. They are:-

1. Myanmar National Democracy Alliance (MNDA)
2. Myanmar National Solidarity Party (MNSP)
3. National Democracy Alliance Army Military and Local Administration Committee (Eastern Shan State) (NDAA)
4. Shan State Army (SSA)
5. New Democratic Army (NDA)
6. Kachin Defense Army (KDA)
7. Pa-O National Organization (PNO)
8. Palaung State Liberation Party (PSLP)
9. Kayan National Guards (KNG)
10. Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)
11. Kayinni National Liberation Front (KNLF)

The Government has also offered an olive-branch and invited few remaining armed groups to return to the legal fold in a spirit of national reconciliation.

Madam Chairperson,

Few individuals from expatriate illegal organizations operating outside Myanmar made critical remarks levelled at my country. In view of the foregoing, it is evident that those critical comments are at variance with the realities and prevailing situation in my country, and are devoid of any credence whatsoever.

Madam Chairperson,

Our national endeavours for the solidarity, unity and co-prosperity of all national races and all brethren in the Union are taking major strides. With our continued dedication, determination and diligence in pursuit of this goal, we feel sure that the future will bring us more and more fresh laurels.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.