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## Burma's Democracy and Ethnic Rights Movement Welcomes European Union Statement on Elections and Call for Dialogue



The Ten Alliances of Burma's democracy and ethnic rights movement expressed support for the European Union's renewal of its Common Position on Burma for another year, which also extended economic sanctions on the military regime.



"With their planned sham elections, the regime is hoping that the EU and other countries will fall for the thinly veiled attempt to legitimize continued military rule. By maintaining sanctions, the EU is sending a strong signal that the regime must change course for these elections to have any legitimacy whatsoever," said U Maung Maung, General Secretary of the National Council of the Union of Burma.



In reference to Burma's planned elections for later this year, the EU Council expressed "serious concerns" that new election laws "do not provide for free and fair elections," and called on the military regime to take further steps. The EU statement adopted in Luxembourg on 26 April also called for the release of political prisoners, an end to human rights violations, and political dialogue between all stakeholders. These points reaffirm the key benchmarks long advocated by the Ten Alliances of Burma's movement for democracy and ethnic rights. The alliances insist that the regime must meet these benchmarks to ensure truly democratic progress in Burma, and that without them elections will not be a step towards genuine democracy. They include:



1. The unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi;
2. Cessation of hostilities against ethnic groups and pro-democracy forces; and,
3. Inclusive dialogue with key stakeholders from democracy groups and ethnic nationalities, including a review of the 2008 Constitution.



"Burma is becoming increasingly unstable under the military regime. Tensions in northeastern Burma are rising as the junta continues to press armed ethnic groups into joining their Border Guard Force. The National League for Democracy and other opposition groups will also come under increased pressure from the junta after the political party registration deadline. The EU and international community must increase pressure on the junta to stop these hostilities immediately," said Mai Phone Kyaw, General Secretary of the National Democratic Front.



"In terms of the upcoming EU delegation to Burma, we ask EU Envoy Fassino to reiterate the EU's support of these minimum benchmarks, and focus his efforts on facilitating dialogue between all stakeholders before the elections," said U Moe Zaw Oo, Joint General Secretary of the National League for Democracy – Liberated Area (NLD-LA), in reference to the "exploratory mission" mentioned in



the EU's statement yesterday. The Ten Alliances also emphasized that any delegation to Burma should insist on meeting with representatives of opposition groups, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the NLD, and ethnic leaders.

*The Ten Alliances of Burma's democracy and ethnic rights movement represent the most broad-based and multi-ethnic cooperation of political and civil society organizations from inside and in exile working for national reconciliation, peace, and freedom in Burma. In March, the alliances launched the Global Campaign Against Burma's 2010 Military Elections, with the support of over 150 groups from all over the world.*

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