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## **Press Release: Burma Partnership Celebrates Continuing Regional Solidarity for Burma and Embraces the Work Ahead for Progressive Voice**

*By Burma Partnership and Progressive Voice*

[Rangoon, 10 October 2016] – Today, after reflecting on ten years of work coordinating the regional solidarity movement for human rights and democracy in Burma, Burma Partnership (BP) announced its discontinuation and the establishment of ‘Progressive Voice,’ a new participatory, rights-based research and advocacy organization, born out of Burma Partnership.

Burma Partnership emerged out of the movement for democracy and human rights based on Burma’s border. It was established in 2006 at the regional conference, “Democratic Change by the People: Asia-Pacific Partnership on Burma” organized by the Forum for Democracy in Burma (FDB), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and the Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN-Burma) in Chiang Mai, Thailand and attended by nearly 100 participants representing 47 organizations from 16 countries around the world working for a free and democratic Burma.

Speaking at the press conference, Chalida Tajarosuk, Director of People’s Empowerment Foundation and member of FORUM-ASIA, a Working Group member of BP, said, “The 2006 conference which founded Burma Partnership was the first ever meeting between Burma activists and regional and international solidarity friends who were campaigning for democracy and human rights in Burma. At the end, we all agreed to establish this people-to-people solidarity network to support the collective efforts of all peoples working towards democracy, ethnic equality, peace, and human rights in Burma in the Asia-Pacific region.” At its inception, the network was initially named Asia-Pacific Peoples’ Partnership on Burma.

Naw San, former General Secretary and advisor at Students and Youth Congress of Burma, another Working Group member of BP, reflected, “The solidarity movement from the region gave us strength, and through the work of Burma Partnership, the democracy and human rights movement based on the Burma border areas gained more international and regional support to help put pressure on the military regime.”

BP’s Working Group Members, which include national solidarity networks from the Philippines, Indonesia, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan, regional solidarity networks and Burma’s border-based alliance organizations tirelessly worked to mobilize support for and to amplify the voices of the Burmese democracy movement in the Asia region and internationally. Gus Miclat, Convener of the Asia Pacific Solidarity Coalition (APSOC) and the Free Burma Coalition – Philippines (FBCP), stated, “Given the persistent atrocities committed by the military, many of which are still occurring today, it is imperative that regional friends like us continue to offer our support and solidarity for the struggles faced by the peoples of Burma. And as Burma is now embarking on a path towards democratization, despite the challenges ahead, we have faith in the people and we will continue to stand by our Burmese friends as they continue with the struggle to achieve genuine democracy, freedom, peace and justice. At the same time, while we see the deterioration of fundamental freedoms in other countries in our ASEAN region, we hope that our Burma friends will also join us in our common struggle for the protection of the human rights of peoples and communities in the region.”



Speakers at the press conference made their observations on the political changes in Burma since 2011, as well as the shifting civil society landscape inside the country and on the border areas. Khin Ohmar, Coordinator of Burma Partnership, outlined how this has also led to the conclusion of Burma Partnership’s mandate, “The concept of Burma’s democracy movement has transitioned to a more diverse and broader scope, and thus the mandate and work of Burma Partnership to mobilize a coordinated regional civil society movement with a common strategy to strive for a democratic and free Burma has also come to an end.”

She continued, “Yet there is still so much to do to reach to the point where Burma becomes a truly democratic and free country in which all its peoples are able to live in dignity and peace and that their rights are protected by the State, and therefore, we are launching this new organization, Progressive Voice, at this time of closing Burma Partnership.”

Assessing the changing political and civil society landscape, Progressive Voice will draw on BP’s existing strengths and networks to fill the need for a rights-based policy narrative on Burma that reflects the voices from the ground. Interim Coordinator, Aung Khaing Min explained further, “As Progressive Voice we intend to bridge between vulnerable and marginalized communities on the ground and policymakers, both domestic and international, and advocate for these local voices to be placed at the centre of policymaking through participatory research and rights-based policy recommendations.”

The resources that Burma Partnership has archived throughout the years will still be available at [www.burmapartnership.org](http://www.burmapartnership.org). For future updates on policy research reports, briefing papers and weekly commentaries, please visit [www.progressivevoicemyanmar.org](http://www.progressivevoicemyanmar.org).

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**Working Group Members of Burma Partnership:**

<p><b>Burmese Alliance Organizations:</b> Forum for Democracy in Burma (FDB) Nationalities Youth Forum (NYF) Students and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB)</p> <p><b>Regional Solidarity Networks:</b> Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN-Burma) Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) Asia Pacific Solidarity Coalition (APSOC)</p>	<p><b>National Solidarity Coalitions:</b> Burma Campaign Korea (BCK) Free Burma Coalition-Philippines (FBC-Philippines) Hong Kong Coalition for a Free Burma (HKCFB) People’s Forum on Burma (PFB) (Japan) Solidaritas Indonesia untuk Burma (SIB)/Solidaritas Indonesia untuk Asean Peoples (SIAP)</p>
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