



MYANMAR

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STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY U TIN WINN

MINISTER, OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

AND

CHAIRMAN OF THE DELEGATION

OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR

AT THE FIFTY-NINTH SESSION

OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,

Allow me first of all to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Fifty-ninth Session of the General Assembly. I am fully confident that your wisdom and diplomatic skills will guide our deliberations to a fruitful outcome. I would also like to take the occasion to convey my appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte for his able leadership and contributions to the success of the previous session. My delegation also pays tribute to the Secretary-General for his selfless dedication to the cause of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

The world today faces many daunting challenges. Most ominous and threatening among them are issues of peace and security. Under these circumstances it is worth recalling the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence which were enunciated fifty years ago by Myanmar together with China and India to provide the basic principles for inter state relations. The principles were subsequently adopted by Asian African leaders in the Bandung Declaration of 1955. The Summit Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade in 1961 also adopted them as basic principles of the Movement. The United Nations itself endorsed these principles. Founded on a premise of the essential unity of humankind, these Five Principles remain as relevant and valid today as on the day they were announced.

Mr. President,

Myanmar considers that the United Nations, which represents international legitimacy and near universal membership, is the sole multilateral forum for addressing urgent global issues. Recent events remind us of the

futility of unilateralism and danger of resort to the use of force without the authorization of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

The United Nations has served its Member States well since its creation. However it must move with the times. Threats to the international system and the rapidly evolving international situation demand a thorough reform of the Organization, its mechanisms, structure and working methods.

In this context, we would like to reiterate our views on the reform of the Organization, including that of the Security Council. The expansion and reform of the Security Council must be an integral part of the common package. If it is to become more representative and reflect contemporary political and economic realities, the Council should be expanded in both categories of membership. An ideal solution in the democratization process would be the abolition of the veto. Until then its application should be limited. It is also our view that new Permanent Members of the Security Council should enjoy the same rights and privileges as the current members.

Myanmar notes with interest the ongoing work of the High-Level Panel of the United Nations Secretary-General on Threats, Challenges and Change. We would like to emphasize the need for inclusive, open-ended and transparent consultations among Member States on the recommendations of the Secretary-General expected to come out of the report of the Panel.

Mr. President,

In this highly globalized world, regional cooperation, including South-South cooperation can well complement international cooperation. As a member of ASEAN, Myanmar is actively involved in the association's activities for promoting regional peace, stability and prosperity and enhancing cooperation in the Asia Pacific Region.

Myanmar is also an active player in sub-regional cooperation initiatives such as ACMECS (Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy) and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical Cooperation). These are noteworthy frameworks for closer economic and social cooperation among neighbouring countries. Myanmar also actively participates in the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), a forum aimed at drawing strength from Asian countries for sustainable development.

Mr. President,

Terrorism is one of the most serious challenges that the world faces today. It threatens national sovereignty and violates human rights, including the right to life.

Last year, terrorists carried their war to the doorstep of the United Nations. They cruelly extinguished the lives of 22 innocent persons including that of Special Representative Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello at the UN headquarters in Baghdad. More recently, we have seen wanton acts of terrorism in diverse parts of the globe, from Beslan to Jakarta to Madrid.

Myanmar unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and joins the international community in calling for concerted action to combat the menace in accordance with the UN Charter and international law.

We have never permitted the use of our territory for hostile acts against any State. We have neither provided assistance to those involved in terrorist acts nor safe haven to them. We never will.

Myanmar is doing its utmost to combat this menace at the national, regional and international levels. It was among the first countries to submit a report to the United Nations Counter Terrorism Committee, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and has since submitted its third report. It has signed or acceded to eleven of the twelve international legal instruments related

to the suppression of terrorism. It is also actively involved in the Bali Process to combat transnational crime, including international terrorism.

Mr. President,

Illicit trafficking in drugs is another challenge that is closely linked to other transnational crimes. Success in the war against drugs will contribute to a successful outcome in the fight against transnational crime. Myanmar accords topmost priority to the suppression and eradication of narcotic drugs. A 15 year national plan is targeted at eradication of narcotic drugs in the country by the year 2014.

In the last decade Myanmar seized and destroyed drugs valued at more than 14.5 billion US dollars. A national project known as "New Destiny" which expedites crop substitution has had significant success. Poppy farmers have voluntarily surrendered over one hundred and fifty two thousand kilograms of poppy seeds in return for cash crops seeds. The poppy seeds so surrendered would have produced over 41 tons of heroin. The seeds were put to the torch on 11 separate occasions in 2002-2003.

United States Drugs Enforcement Agency figures show that over a span of eight years, from 1996 to 2003, poppy cultivation has steadily declined by 71 percent while opium production decreased by 81 percent. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes has acknowledged Myanmar's commitment to the anti-drug campaign.

In recent years the problem of synthetic drugs has also surfaced. The illicit drugs chain begins with the inadequate control of the trade in precursor chemicals. It culminates in money laundering through international financial and commercial channels. The problem transcends national boundaries and can be dealt only through international cooperation. It bears repetition that my country does not produce precursor chemicals used in the production of narcotic drugs. We would like to urge countries that produce precursor chemicals to

institute effective regulatory controls. Without precursor chemicals there can be no amphetamine-type synthetic drugs.

Myanmar is determined in its fight against drugs. It has established bilateral, trilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation to rid the world of this scourge.

Mr. President,

Some western countries allege that Myanmar is not adequately addressing the issue of trafficking in persons. Nothing can be further from the truth. In fact, Myanmar views trafficking in persons as an evil that must be suppressed through concerted action. We have been seriously tackling the problem through a comprehensive framework comprising national legislation, a plan of action, high level commitment as well as through bilateral, regional and international cooperation, including the Bali Process.

In this connection, Myanmar acceded to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on 30 March of this year. A national law on anti- human trafficking is being drafted in accord with that Convention.

Myanmar will host the meeting of the six-nation Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) next month.

Mr. President,

Allegations of human rights violations in Myanmar are aimed at discrediting the Government for political purposes. Myanmar believes that the question of human rights is an important issue. It should be addressed with objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity. Above all, the historical background and social, religious and cultural characteristics of countries must be accorded the consideration they deserve.

Myanmar has consistently cooperated with the United Nations on human rights issues. It is promoting and protecting the fundamental rights of its citizens, including the right to food, clothing and shelter and the right to development. In this context, a national Human Rights Committee has already been established and human rights awareness is being introduced in school curricula nationwide as well as through workshops.

Mr. President,

An interview by a politically motivated NGO with 25 or so insurgents inside a neighbouring country became the basis of a report that there are 70,000 child soldiers in the Myanmar national armed forces. This is a farfetched conclusion. The falsehood found its way into the Secretary-General's report on Children and Armed Conflict in 2002. The report subsequently became the resource document in the thematic debate on children and armed conflict that ensued in the Security Council.

I wish to firmly reiterate that, first Myanmar is not a nation in armed conflict. It is a nation at peace. Second, I wish to clearly state that children are not permitted to be recruited into the Armed Services in Myanmar by law or in practice.

A preventive programme has been in place in the country even before the Security Council thematic resolution was adopted. In this regard, the Chairman of the Committee on the Prevention of the Recruitment of Child Soldiers recently received the UNICEF representative in Myanmar to explore ways and means to enhance cooperation. The representative was afforded the opportunity to visit the army recruitment centre near Yangon, and subsequently the army recruitment centre in Mandalay together with the UN Resident Coordinator. They made field trips and held discussions with military personnel concerned. They also met the recruits. Myanmar is finalizing an Action Plan and is cooperating with UNICEF in that regard. It will also continue its cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.

Mr. President,

Allow me to turn to developments in my country. Peace and stability has been restored. We are taking steps to ensure a smooth transition to a peaceful, democratic modern state.

Myanmar places the highest priority on national reconciliation to achieve unity among the 135 national races. In order to strengthen ties and promote economic and social development of the national races inhabiting the border areas the Government has expended 58 billion Kyats and over 550 million US dollars in infrastructure development that includes communication networks and education and health facilities promoting the quality of life of those citizens.

Notwithstanding the unilateral sanctions of some western countries, Myanmar has been able to develop the economy and promote the well-being of its people. We have achieved this, relying mainly on our own resources and with the assistance and cooperation of our neighbours.

Noteworthy advances have been made in the health and education sectors. The country now has 757 hospitals, an increase of 140 hospitals over a span of 15 years. In the past year alone, 22 new hospitals were commissioned. Over the same period the number of colleges and universities in the country has increased from 32 to 154. In these institutes enrolment has risen dramatically from 120,000 to 890,000.

Mr. President,

Allow me now to turn to recent political developments in my country. Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt announced a seven step road map for transition to democracy in August 2003. The road map has been well received in the country as well as by our neighbours. The ASEAN Summit last November

welcomed the commitment of the Myanmar Government to affect a transition to democracy.

The first and most crucial step of the road map, the reconvening of the National Convention, was taken on 17 May of this year.

The current Convention is attended by 1088 delegates from eight strata representing all walks of life. It is more inclusive than the previous Convention which was attended by only about 700 delegates.

Moreover sixty percent of the delegates in the current Convention are from the national races. Over one hundred delegates are representatives of 17 major armed groups and 17 smaller armed groups who have returned to the legal fold. In the previous Convention, representatives of three or four armed groups which had just returned to the legal fold were present as observers.

During the first session, the sensitive issue of power sharing between the central government and the States and Regions was the main focus of discussion. Indeed power sharing is a vital and delicate issue as the country is now evolving from a unitary government structure to a Union structure where States and Regions will have their own executive and legislative bodies. The delegates held extensive discussions on this issue. In view of the complex and sensitive nature of the deliberations, discussions were time consuming and sometimes intense. After a successful first session, the Convention adjourned on 9 July.

Myanmar is a Union of 135 national races and unity is key to achieving our vision of a prosperous democratic state.

We are greatly encouraged by the results of the first session. The common desire to ensure the success of the seven-step Road Map was evident. Preparations are underway for the second session which is to be resumed in the forthcoming open season.

Once agreement is reached upon the fundamental principles in the National Convention, a new constitution will be drafted. The draft will be put to a referendum for the people of Myanmar to decide. After the adoption of the new Constitution, there will be free and fair elections where the people will elect leaders of their choice.

Mr. President,

The new political structure needs to be strong and resilient, and the country united. The future of the nation cannot be determined by one individual or one party acting alone.

There is no alternative to the National Convention. It is the sole process through which the aspirations of the people of Myanmar for establishing a modern and democratic nation can be fulfilled. We cannot allow the National Convention to be derailed under any circumstances. Failure would plunge the nation into the abyss of anarchy. This is the reason why we place such store on the successful outcome of the National Convention.

We are determined that this vital national endeavour is crowned with success.

I thank you.