

How the International Community can Support UN Efforts in Burma/Myanmar

Report of the Conference



Foreign Affairs and
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Institut québécois
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**How the International Community
can Support UN Efforts
in Burma/Myanmar**

**Report of the conference
held on March 27, 2008
at Château Frontenac in Québec City**

This conference was organised by Université Laval,
l'Institut québécois des hautes études internationales
in cooperation with the Department of Foreign Affairs
and International Trade Canada

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Context

In September 2007, following the violent suppression of peaceful protests that occurred in Burma/Myanmar, the United Nations (UN) deepened its involvement in the country in order to start a process aimed at strengthening democratisation. In the wake of international interventions, including those of the UN Security Council, as well as different national measures, such as sanctions adopted by a few countries including Canada, an international conference was organised by Université Laval, the Institut québécois des hautes études internationales (HEI) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. Some of the most distinguished international experts, members of different international and non-governmental organisations, as well as representatives of the Burmese¹ community from Canada and abroad, gathered together in order to engage in discussions that might help

1. In this report, the term Burmese community refers to and includes all ethnic groups represented in the country.

identify options and additional measures to support UN efforts, efforts ultimately aimed at facilitating the introduction of democratic reforms in Burma/Myanmar.²

During the conference, four discussion sessions were organised around four different themes: supporting the United Nations beyond policy differences; how to engage participation in a national dialogue; how to encourage cooperation with international humanitarian organisations in order to improve living conditions for the Burmese; and democratisation and human rights.

2. In Burmese, Myanmar is the literary name of the country, whereas *Bama* or *Bamar* are the better known oral terms, from which the English term “Burma” and the French term “Birmanie” are derived. Myanmar refers to the ancient mythical inhabitants of the country and is therefore not limited to the Burmese ethnic group. More specifically, *Myan Ma* signifies the magnificent country created by the mythical *Bya Ma* inhabitants. With this designation and the use of the word “Union”, the multiethnic nature of the State is highlighted. Today, the terms “Burma” and “Myanmar” also have a political significance depending upon the recognition of the government in the country. The official name used by the United Nations is Myanmar. The use of the term Burma/Myanmar in this text does not reflect the opinion of the authors.

Executive Summary

The international conference that was held in Québec City on March 27, 2008 enabled the elaboration of many concrete proposals aimed at helping the international community in its support of UN efforts in Burma/Myanmar.³

It is crucial that the international community continue its support of the UN and its involvement in the country, in order to improve the current situation in Burma/Myanmar. If the UN approach remains the only mechanism capable of bringing about real progress at the political level, the international community must not remain silent. It is essential that the international community remain involved, and that this involvement occurs on many levels. The needs of the Burmese population are numerous and the causes of the situation in Burma/Myanmar are many. The international community needs to encourage long-term strategies that impact all groups within the Burmese population, while also supporting

3 . The different points of view elaborated in this report do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Government of Canada, but rather those expressed by the panelists and participants at the conference.

the strengthening of an organised civil society. Encouraging the creation of a constructive internal dialogue represents a significant challenge, yet is a promising initiative. The international community must also remember that the promotion of human rights remains an essential element in strengthening democracy. If it is ultimately the Burmese who will decide their own destiny, the international community needs to continue and deepen its involvement in order to help prepare the population for the anticipated democratic transition.

1. Beyond Policy Differences, a Common Cause - In Support of the United Nations

A. The Role of the UN

The international community is concerned by the ongoing situation that has prevailed for many years in Burma/Myanmar, and the willingness to act is shared by a large number of States throughout the world. However, the approaches favoured by the different parties involved differ in terms of strategies to follow as well as the means to adopt in order to encourage the Burmese regime, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), to begin a dialogue in preparation for a national reconciliation as well as to initiate political reforms.

Although some disagreements remain, there seems to be a consensus amongst the participants over the need for the international community to express, through the UN, a common and united voice regarding the current situation in Burma/Myanmar. According to many of the participants, an agreement of this type is likely difficult to achieve, notably due to the diverging geopolitical interests between the different neighbouring countries, the regional powers, and those States that are geographically far from Burma/Myanmar. Differences between the favoured approaches are also present amongst the members of the international community, whereby some States stress the need for patience, while others advocate the need for action. However, according to the participants, the gathering of the international community around a common voice remains of fundamental importance, in order to achieve positive results in the case of Burma/Myanmar.

Many participants highlighted the failures of the international community, notably the visits by the UN Special Envoy, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari; visits aimed at establishing a mediation with the military junta in power in Burma/Myanmar. However, some participants stated that the UN's power should not be underestimated, and that although there have been recent failures, UN diplomacy remains the most likely and credible means to improve the situation in the country. As well, the participants highlighted the loss of influence and perhaps even the absence of political leverage of the great powers in terms of their influence over the military junta, a reality that raises the importance of UN involvement in this case. It

thus appears crucial for the international community to continue to support the UN in its involvement and interest in Burma/Myanmar.

It was also mentioned that binding resolutions voted by the UN Security Council could undoubtedly serve as a unifying element amongst the members of the international community. Considering the opposition from both China and Russia regarding a possible resolution, a participant proposed leaving more room for these two countries in their approaches and actions towards the Burmese junta. Furthermore, the relative concept of the responsibility to protect was also mentioned, in that it might provide the UN with greater opportunities to intervene.

Many participants indicated that the current problem in Burma/Myanmar may prove to be beyond the capability of unilateral action by the UN through mediation by the Secretary-General, with sanctions by the Security Council, or by actions taken by the Human Rights Council. With this in mind, the participants brought up the role that different UN agencies could play in the elaboration of specific programmes, programmes that could help different groups within the Burmese population. A participant mentioned the successes of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, a group in which meetings encourage the elaboration of a consensus amongst the international community. This group of fourteen States⁴ represents an effective forum for the development of a shared approach aimed at implementing a mediation strategy with the SPDC. It was also mentioned that World Bank involvement is non-existent in Burma/Myanmar, and that this organisation could play an important role.

B. The Role of the International Community

Although UN diplomacy is clearly the central pillar of the combined efforts of the international community, UN involvement must also be present at other levels. In this regard, the crucial role that the international community can play in improving the lives of the Burmese was highlighted. As well, in the development of strategies aimed at improving the social and sanitary conditions of the Burmese, the international

4. The member states are: Australia, Indonesia, Russia, United States, China, Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, France, Norway, Thailand, India, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

community might also find a unifying action and common cause in its intervention in Burma/Myanmar.

The participants also addressed the positive results of a renewed interest in increasing support for education. The promotion of education, a sector in which accessibility has decreased in Burma/Myanmar, would be a long-term means to help promote awareness within the Burmese population, while also helping prepare Burmese civil society for the eventual transition. This transition, as noted by many participants, is inevitable and the international community must be prepared to assist in its facilitation. Contributing to the improvement of education will help strengthen the management skills of internal organisations as well as help to bring together different segments of the population.

The participants also emphasised the importance of maintaining a dialogue with the SPDC. According to these participants, any sustainable solutions in Burma/Myanmar can only be achieved through a firm negotiation with the military junta. The international community must apply itself in convincing and demonstrating to the Burmese leaders that a regime change would not constitute a harmful element and that the leaders could play an even greater role in an open and democratic society. In this regard, the international community must strive to improve the perception of the future, not only for the population, but also for the military. In fact, one participant emphasised in particular the importance of an official declaration from ethnic groups that recognizes the integrity of the territory of the "Union of Myanmar." Such a statement would reduce the fears of the military regime and of China, of a potential outburst in Burma/Myanmar at the moment of the transition of the regime, and would avoid creating a chaotic and unstable situation.

It is also very important that the creation of an official and constructive dialogue be encouraged between representatives of the National League for Democracy (NLD)⁵, representatives of the different ethnic groups, and the military junta. Many of the participants believe that the fate of the Burmese is in their own hands. However, the international community can play a crucial role in supporting the NLD. It was also

5 . The National League for Democracy (NLD) is lead by Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi. The party won the 1990 elections; however, the results were not recognized by the SPDC.

proposed that increased support of the Burmese government in exile be considered. The National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), a political association that is working for a democratic transition, should be financially supported as the Burmese democratic movement, both locally and abroad, relies principally on the support of the international community. The feeling of isolation that the Burmese feel could thus be reduced.

In terms of the economic sanctions that many countries, including Canada, have imposed upon the military junta since the end of the 1990s, the participants share differing opinions as to their effectiveness. For some, these sanctions are clearly an efficient form of pressure, reducing the junta's room to manoeuvre, and should even be increased. Other participants feel, however, that the sanctions have not produced any tangible results and instead unnecessarily punish the population, contributing to maintaining the current situation in Burma/Myanmar. One participant felt that the sanctions would be more effective if a dialogue was already in place, and if the sanctions were used with the intent of obtaining concessions, instead of using them as instruments to initiate negotiations. Another participant also stated that the lack of unity within the international community severely weakens the impact of the sanctions.

In addition, a call was made for more targeted sanctions. These sanctions should directly target specific individuals, such as the sympathisers and beneficiaries of the regime, or even certain companies. For example, many mining companies work indifferently on Burmese soil and could be targeted. To this purpose, a deeper understanding of the activities of the companies that are involved in Burma/Myanmar is necessary.

Finally, it was also suggested to strengthen the communication network between Burma/Myanmar and other States in the region, as well as with the international community as a whole. The international community, in its willingness to support UN efforts in Burma/Myanmar, must also put pressure on the junta in order for it to accept to meet UN envoys more often.

2. Engaging in National Dialogue

Throughout this session, which attempted to find ways to promote engagement in a national dialogue, two main ideas were addressed: the ways to improve the prospects of a dialogue between the SPDC and the international community, and the means to encourage a dialogue within the many groups that constitute Burmese civil society.

A. Dialogue between the International Community and the SPDC

Many participants highlighted the current circumstances favourable to the establishment of a real dialogue with the junta. The protests of August and September 2007, as well as the May 2008 scheduled national referendum on the creation of a new constitution opening the way for multiparty elections in 2010, constitute events that may create an opportunity to be seized by the international community.

However, some panelists brought up the current difficulties in establishing a dialogue with the junta. Current discussions are mostly unidirectional as the junta senses no real threat. Some insist that it is necessary to establish a balance of power that is conducive to pressuring the junta into opening up to dialogue. In fact, a participant noted that the United Nations General Assembly has already called upon Burma/Myanmar for a number of years to begin a tripartite dialogue between the military, democracy activists, as well as different ethnic minorities. Yet this dialogue has not yet begun, and since the non-recognition of the election results of May 1990 by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)⁶, the political situation in Burma/Myanmar remains unchanged.

Yet many participants remain convinced that the creation of a real dialogue with the military junta is not only possible, but essential. This dialogue with the junta is necessary as military participation is vital to achieve any significant progress, and as pointed out by a participant, no compromise is possible without dialogue. According to another participant, compromise and moderation constitute two essential elements for a constructive negotiation with the SPDC.

6. Today referred to as the SPDC.

In order to make real progress in this area, a panelist reiterated the importance of a renewed approach for the UN. The junta must not perceive the international community to be seeking to impose a road map. According to this participant, it is counterproductive to promote a democratic reform on the basis of the abandoning of power by the military. All solutions must instead spring from negotiations with the junta, and the international community should instead support a negotiated process that originates from inside Burma/Myanmar. A participant also noted the major role that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) should play in the creation of a dialogue with the military junta. It is important to remember that this proposal was reiterated a number of times during the conference. More precisely, it was recommended that the banning of all types of illegal trafficking be included in the ASEAN Charter currently under debate. To this purpose, it was recognized that the ASEAN does not have the capability to intervene in Burma/Myanmar. However, it seems that Indonesia received an endorsement from the Association to intervene and proceed with an approach inspired from the JIM (Jakarta Informal Meetings) model used during the conflict in Cambodia.

B. Encouraging the Creation of a Dialogue at the State Level in Burma/Myanmar

In terms of the means to support a national dialogue, the participants believe that the creation of such a dialogue is possible. These participants indicate that many Burmese groups are ready for a dialogue and that some slight progress has been noted in this regard. Other participants, more skeptical of the emergence of such a dialogue in Burma/Myanmar, mentioned the previous reluctance of the junta in giving up some of its power to a third party.

The junta's non-recognition of ethnic groups as political entities in the political arena necessitates the taking of effective measures by the international community, in order to pressure the military junta into beginning national negotiations. The need to impose targeted economic sanctions by the international community, as well as binding sanctions by the UN Security Council, was reaffirmed. Some participants also stated that it is necessary to increase the support and the financing of the pro-democracy movement, both internally and abroad.

If the proposed options aimed at encouraging such a dialogue are not shared by all of the participants, the group agrees nevertheless on the importance of the existence of a dialogue and the need to include all sectors of Burmese society, in order to begin a constructive national reflection on the future of Burma/Myanmar. In this regard, a participant pointed out the important role that religious organisations could play in establishing such a dialogue.

In addition, a participant remarked that the consequences of the crisis in Burma/Myanmar are numerous. The problems are diverse in nature: they are clearly social, humanitarian, political, economic, but they are also environmental. The environmental problems in Burma/Myanmar could represent a basis for negotiation amongst the different national groups. As well, because this problem directly affects the neighboring States, the environmental question could also serve as the foundation of a unifying cause in the creation of a regional dialogue.

If the establishment of a national dialogue appears to be a difficult task, it is nevertheless realistic in the eyes of the participants. However, the Burmese population needs to feel assisted in the steps to be taken. To accomplish this task, a participant stated that the international community needs to support the Burmese in their pursuit of democracy. In light of the refusal of the junta to allow room for negotiations within Burmese civil society, a participant reiterated the increased role that must be played by the international community in the supporting and financing of different Burmese organisations, both inside the country and in exile.

Another participant emphasised the importance of transparency with respect to actions taken by the international community. It is important for the international community to maintain its support of UN attempts to pressure the military junta, yet it must at the same time also increase its support of organisations and the Burmese population. The latter, who is discouraged by the failures of the UN, must be supported in its attempts to establish internal dialogue, not only between these different groups, but also with the SPDC.

3. Improving Living Conditions - Encouraging Cooperation with International Humanitarian Organisations

A. The Role of Humanitarian Organisations in Burma/Myanmar

Many experts pointed out the difficult living conditions in which the Burmese population lives. At each presentation during this session, disturbing examples were reported, examples from inside Burma/Myanmar as well as along its borders. In this regard, a participant stated that the case of Burmese refugees is overlooked, as the issue remains very important.

It is therefore necessary to strengthen border programmes that have been established and are managed by diverse United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners. More precisely, further interventions as regards refugee law are needed, as is further encouragement regarding the recognition of refugee status by host countries and the establishment of more effective programmes with the goal of facilitating a better reinsertion of refugees. It is also important to ensure that the situation of all refugees is being addressed, as the situation of the refugees in the West is as serious as that of those in the East, as aid for these regions is underfunded. Moreover, many participants stated that there are more and more refugees seeking food, and no longer only political refugees.

There is clearly a consensus in terms of the essential role that humanitarian organisations play in helping a civil population in despair. Consequently, the international community and the UN must both continue, but also strengthen their support for this population. A participant highlighted the scope of the actions of these humanitarian agencies in many areas: “We not only save lives by our healthcare initiatives, but also address the education of women and children.” Often, humanitarian organisations are important observers that inform the international community about the state of the living conditions within society. This is why, even though the political role of the UN is vital, we must be careful not to underestimate the work of these humanitarian agencies.

B. Cooperation between Humanitarian Organisations

Many participants agree that the different UN humanitarian agencies are not capable of satisfying all of the needs alone. Cooperation with other international humanitarian organisations is thus essential and must continually be adequately financially supported by both the international community and the UN. At the same time, it is also important to help prevent the decline in the number of social services provided by non-governmental organisations (NGO) that are active in Burma/Myanmar.

As well, aid that is distributed to the Burmese population could be diversified, as the social problems are numerous and there are many sectors that require assistance, notably in health, in education, and in security. The importance of reaching all groups within the Burmese population, beginning with children, was highlighted. The Burmese civil society remain at the heart of a democratic future in Burma/Myanmar, which is why according to one participant, we must invest in the potential that also exists in both refugee and exiled communities. According to the participants, in developing a civil society we can build the foundations for a democratic transition and thereby establish conditions for the emergence of future leaders in the country.

With this goal in mind, it was also suggested that many humanitarian corridors be established so that the United Nations agencies and their partners may freely and safely access the Burmese population and different ethnic minorities in need. According to the experts, only a joint intervention by the international community through the UN would guarantee such an initiative.

According to a participant, we must also not forget the role of the Sangha when discussing the cooperation between the different humanitarian organisations. As a religious association, the Sangha can take concrete actions as the monks are physically and spiritually close to the Burmese population and can therefore more easily reach them. In addition, the network established by the monks in Burma/Myanmar can continue to serve both international agencies as well as the population. It is for this reason that support towards education in the few monastery schools in the country must continue, as they remain the only schools still open to the Burmese population.

Finally, the importance of financially supporting Burmese media abroad was stated by one of the participants. These media represent

important witnesses about the situation in Burma/Myanmar, especially considering that some Burmese journalists are able to remain in direct contact with their compatriots in the country. A participant recalled that it was thanks to this network that the international community was largely informed about the Saffron Revolution, subsequently leading to the international community sanctioning the junta. Information, when it is correct, proves to be an important tool in aiding and linking-up international organisations.

C. The Role of Economic Sanctions

In the context of a discussion that is more oriented towards humanitarian needs, the participants almost unanimously felt the need to increasingly use targeted economic sanctions. For some, economic sanctions have not succeeded in reducing the junta's power, where the real victim is the Burmese population. This is why one participant emphasized the need to fully understand the financial network of the junta, in order to enable a better use of economic sanctions and to target specific individuals and their families. It would also be possible to carry out individual sanctions through the freezing of assets in the bank accounts of these respective parties.

On the other hand, an increased role at the humanitarian level for companies that are working in Burma/Myanmar is hoped for by a participant. According to this participant, the lack of local investment is bad for Burma/Myanmar. There is a way to improve the living conditions in the country while attracting more substantial investments from the country's commercial partners.

4. Democratisation and Human Rights

It is first important to remember that the three pillars of the UN are security, development and human rights. Yet security depends upon development which is itself linked to human rights. This is why it is imperative that reforms that encourage the respect for civil rights in Burma/Myanmar first be promoted.

For a large majority of the participants, civil rights are clearly disregarded in Burma/Myanmar. Yet these civil rights are vitally important

for the improvement of the situation in the country. This is why actions must be taken at different levels, both simultaneously and by mutual agreement, in order to ensure that the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar is granted frequent access to the country. The rapporteur's action is essential, in order to gather information, testimonials and data, as well as to verify accusations related to human rights violations in the country.

A. The Role of the United Nations

Firstly, the responsibility of the United Nations to protect human rights must be clearly invoked. For this, and with the support of the international community, it is necessary to obtain a resolution by the United Nations that underlines all of the human rights concerns in Burma/Myanmar. According to a participant, current resolutions related to human rights in Burma/Myanmar are not restrictive enough.

At the same time, another participant indicated that we must promote better understanding of the decisions taken at the UN regarding Burma/Myanmar. This must occur through firm resolutions, particularly as concerns the rights of children and the protection of women. Meanwhile, another participant suggested the need for a resolution on an arms embargo.

Secondly, it is essential to increase the number of meetings within the UN between those countries that are preoccupied by the situation in Burma/Myanmar. More specifically, one participant expressed interest in letting Russia, China and India take initiatives so that they may support the United Nations.

Thirdly, in order to facilitate dialogue between the UN and the representatives of the Burmese government, many participants strongly believe that increased visits to Burma/Myanmar need to occur by the UN. In fact, one participant went as far as to suggest that the Secretary-General should go to Burma/Myanmar. Yet this initiative cannot be established without the mutual agreement and incontestable support of the international community. In this perspective, it was also felt that more firmness needed to be shown towards the Burmese military junta. As stated by a participant, we must not forget that human rights are based on laws that are guaranteed by the International Court of Justice.

Finally, the UN must be ready to clearly respond to the referendum of May 2008. The illegal and undemocratic process leading to this referendum must not be forgotten.

B. The Role of the International Community

First of all, a participant noted that it is ultimately the Burmese population that will determine the process and the method of the path to democracy in Burma/Myanmar. However, this participant also highlighted that the international community bears an important responsibility in terms of the need to support this process and the population; in other words: "Help them help themselves."

The first responsibility of the international community is that of providing protection. To do so, the international community must, among other things, increase humanitarian aid to those that are in need, as well as to those organisations that work directly with the population in distress. More precisely, this consists of supporting the implementation of refugee integration programmes and security measures in contested territories, and to recognize the legal existence of refugees by governments, notably the Government of Thailand.

The second responsibility of the international community is that of supporting UN efforts in Burma/Myanmar. With this goal in mind, official visits to Burma/Myanmar need to be promoted, and the junta needs to be pressured into accepting an increased number of meetings, both international and national.

In this regard, a participant suggested the possibility that some countries in the international community might act as mediators at different levels, promoting regular access to the country for the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar. According to this participant, in the context of regional conferences about Burma/Myanmar, it was revealed that Indonesia could serve as an influential actor in this matter. It appears as though there is great potential for Indonesia and Burma/Myanmar to engage in both formal and informal negotiations.

The role of civil society was also put forward by another participant, a role that cannot be neglected as the international community is a strong supporter of ASEAN initiatives to create a Charter of Human Rights.

Finally, the international community must clearly show the Burmese junta that there is a price to pay for arrogance and ignorance shown in

regards to the laws and resolutions of the UN, and the junta must fully understand this price “ there is a price to pay for remaining outside of the moral standards of the international community.

C. The Role of International Agencies

It appears as though the only organisation that is currently well-established in terms of addressing human rights in Burma/Myanmar is the International Labour Organization (ILO). This organisation is physically operating in the country and is able to freely move about and hear complaints in strict confidence.

A participant stated that there exists a solid legal foundation in Burma/Myanmar: ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (ILO Convention n° 29). Moreover, all of the ILO's current mandates are based on the implementation of these conventions. The ILO has succeeded in creating a framework in which individuals can register a complaint, as well as succeed in remaining in contact with those individuals that have done so.

While the ILO's role remains a rare case, it has nevertheless resulted in putting real pressure on the Burmese regime. The ILO would like to broaden its involvement into other areas such as unions and freedom of speech. This is why it is important to follow the work of the organisation and to work closely with it, in order to apply similar initiatives in other sectors.

In this regard, another participant also encouraged the different non-governmental organisations (NGO) to strengthen their diplomatic roles.

D. The Specific Role of the Government of Canada

According to a participant, Canada could adopt a stronger position in terms of democratisation and human rights in the case of Burma/Myanmar. The organisation of an international conference about the country represents a first step, but it is agreed that this initiative must be carried on.

Many participants stated that the motions of 2005 and the sanctions of September 2007, taken by Canada, were well-received. However, we must hope that further efforts will be made to encourage political reforms in Burma/Myanmar. The experts are aware of the existence of Canadian legislation that must be respected, yet it is hoped that the Canadian

government will adopt a more explicit position as regards the aid and support that it chooses to provide towards UN efforts.

It is therefore asked that the Government of Canada actively participate in preparation for a transition to democracy in Burma/Myanmar. Among other things, this consists in offering financial support to the different pro-democratic Burmese political associations that are situated on Canadian territory, while facilitating access to appropriate education for the Burmese in exile. It is also hoped that the Canadian government will also increase humanitarian aid in Burma/Myanmar.

According to many people, the Government of Canada must be ready for a firm response following the May 2008 referendum that the junta in power in Burma/Myanmar is preparing.

Finally, the Government of Canada must maintain, without ambiguity, its adopted policies towards Burma/Myanmar.

Summary and Conclusion

The events of September 2007 enabled the international community to better understand the true nature of the Burmese military regime. The Burmese democratic movement can from now on count on the support of the young generation that had its first taste of commitment to achieving democracy in the “Saffron Revolution.” This movement has given renewed strength to the previous “88 Generation” movement, today in exile, yet united by an international network. The Burmese are more than ever committed to peacefully resolving the deep political, economic and social crisis in the country. However, it is important to note that the situation in Burma/Myanmar remains unchanged and that the junta is showing itself to be united when confronted by a threat. Hostile to all compromise, the SPDC does not seem to easily yield to international pressure and is once more delaying the move towards a democratic transition. It has become imperative that the international community support UN efforts in Burma/Myanmar.

In light of these events, an international conference was organised in Québec City on March 27, 2008 to identify ways in which the international community can assist UN efforts in Burma/Myanmar. It enabled the gathering of many international experts on Burma/Myanmar as well as members of civil society, in order to provide new analyses and

perspectives regarding steps to be taken or measures strengthened in order to facilitate a democratic transition in Burma/Myanmar. As well, despite the level of analyses, the different interests and diverse priorities that were apparent among the participants, some points in common were nevertheless clearly revealed.

First off, the international community must not lose confidence in UN action. On the contrary, the international community must appear to be united in order to be able to present itself as a powerful force in the eyes of the Burmese junta. The UN must continue to receive strong support through a common voice, and by multiplying official visits at the national, regional and international levels.

More precisely, the international community needs to adopt a common vision for Burma/Myanmar, with democratisation and the enforcement of civil rights at the heart of this vision. This is why the participants have strongly recommended the adoption of a United Nations resolution underlining human rights violations in Burma/Myanmar. Likewise, all efforts by the ASEAN to create a Charter of Human Rights must also be supported.

Next, diplomatic pressure must continue to be applied on the junta. Through the use of targeted economic sanctions, the SPDC may be effectively weakened. The sanctions must therefore be carefully oriented towards the members of the junta or their sympathizers, in order to spare the civil population. At the same time, it is desirable to establish a dialogue with the military regime, which appears difficult but remains essential. It is important to note that the national dialogue must exist at all levels within Burmese society.

We must also understand that there is a potential link to be made between sanction and dialogue, and between established agreement and dialogue. By simply attentively observing the role and work of the ILO in Burma/Myanmar, we realize that there is room for potential negotiation. The international community must therefore continue to support all ILO initiatives or similar interventions.

Finally, we must give the Burmese the means to achieve their own democratic transition. More precisely, immediate (humanitarian) and long-term (education) aid must receive financial support. The international community cannot envisage a democratic transition in Burma/Myanmar without an increased humanitarian involvement, in the development of aid programmes at the health, education and security

levels. Civil society must be prepared for this transition. At the same time, this aid constitutes an undeniable support to a population that has been struggling against an oppressive regime for almost 50 years in order to enjoy fundamental rights.

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**Annex
Programme**

Welcome Speech

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Mr. **Bernard Garnier**, Vice Rector, Academic and International Activities,
Universit  Laval, Canada

Opening Remarks

The Honorable **Peter Van Loan**, Leader of the Government in the House of
Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform

Panel 1

Chair Professor **G rard Hervouet**, Institut qu b cois des hautes  tudes
internationales, Universit  Laval, Canada

Panelists **Aye Chan Naing**, Democratic Voice of Burma, Norway
Professor **Bruce Matthews**, Acadia University, Canada

Dr. **Zhai Kun**, China Institutes of Contemporary
International Relations

Dr. **Estelle Dricot**, Institut qu b cois des hautes  tudes
internationales, Universit  Laval, Canada

John Virgoe, International Crisis Group, Indonesia

Panel 2

Chair Professor **Paul Evans**, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

Panelists Dr. **Sein Win**, National Coalition Government of the Union
of Burma, United States

Professor **David Steinberg**, Georgetown University, United
States

Professor **Robert Anderson**, Simon Fraser University, Canada

Aung Zaw, The Irrawaddy Newsmagazine, Thailand

Harn Yawngwe, Euro-Burma Office, Belgium

Panel 3

- Chair Professor **Catherine Raymond**, Northern Illinois University, United States
- Panelists **Brian Gorlick**, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Professor **Tim Maung Maung Than**, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore
Dr. **Guy Lubeigt**, Institut de Recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est Contemporaine, Thailand
Peter Gillespie, Inter Pares, Canada
Venerable **U Uttara**, Sasana Ramsi Vihara, United Kingdom

Panel 4

- Chair Mr. **Razmik Panossian**, Rights and Democracy
- Panelists **Tin Maung Htoo**, Canadian Friends of Burma, Canada
Kari Tapiola, International Labour Organization, Switzerland
Rafendi Djamin, Coalition for International Human Rights Advocacy, Indonesia
Augusto Miclat Jr., Initiatives for International Dialogue, Philippines
Professor **Fanny Lafontaine**, Université Laval, Canada

Conclusion

Randolph Mank, Director General for South and Southeast Asia of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada

Keynote Speech

Mr. **Ibrahim Gambari**, UN Special Envoy to Myanmar