

## European Union: Extension of EU Common Position (sanctions) on Burma for six months

Council of the European Union

(General Affairs Council 08/10)

### BURMA/MYANMAR: COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

The European Union has long urged the restoration of democracy, the pursuit of national reconciliation and the protection of human rights in Burma/Myanmar in the interest of all the peoples of the country. The European Union has been following recent developments in Burma/Myanmar with close attention. The Council was cautiously encouraged by the improvement in the political climate there. It welcomed the release of a growing number of political prisoners, the opening of a number of NLD party offices and the resumption of contacts with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). It expressed its strong support for the efforts of UN Special Envoy, Tan Sri Razali Ismail, to promote national reconciliation.

The Council recognised, however, at the same time that these contacts and positive developments could only be the beginning of a wider and deeper process, which should, in the Council's view, lead to a transition to civilian democratic government. The Council called for the acceleration of the ongoing process of liberation of all remaining political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The Council also emphasised the importance of seeing a verifiable end to the practice of forced labour, in line with the demands of the ILO General Conference. The authorities in Burma/Myanmar should co-operate fully with the ILO and grant the Organisation permanent access to the country. The Council will analyse carefully and draw conclusions from the forthcoming report of the high-level ILO mission to Burma/Myanmar and will also await with interest the report of the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma/Myanmar.

The Council agreed to extend the common position of the European Union for a further six months until 29 April 2002 while bringing it in line with Member States' obligations under the UN Charter to grant visas to allow attendance at United Nations meetings or conferences held within their territory. The Council specifically stressed its readiness to accompany the deepening of the reconciliation process with humanitarian assistance which it regarded as entirely compatible with the common position. The Council identified a number of positive measures designed to recognise the process that has been set in motion in Burma/Myanmar in expectation of further positive developments:

- In consultation with all relevant parties, including the NLD, the European Union is prepared to play

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a more active role in helping Burma/Myanmar confront the scourge of HIV/AIDS. The Council wished to convey to the parties in Burma/Myanmar its view that the HIV/AIDS situation is such that determined measures need to be taken urgently. The Council therefore welcomed the Commission's intention to provide a contribution of up to 5M Euros to the activities identified in the framework of the Joint Plan of Action elaborated by the UN Agencies in response to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Burma/Myanmar. This aid will be delivered through independent non-governmental organisations or international agencies with the view to reach the communities in the most needy areas.

- EU Member States would also seek to make significant contributions to these same UN activities;
  
- The European Union would invite the Foreign Minister of Burma/Myanmar to the next EU-ASEAN Ministerial meeting, which is due to be held in Europe in 2002. A visa would be granted to him for that purpose;
  
- Member States concerned will support Burma/Myanmar's application to join the International Hydrographic Organisation;
  
- Member States concerned may consider and advise the authorities in Burma/Myanmar of what steps Burma/Myanmar needs to take to qualify for bilateral debt relief under the IMF/IBRD's "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries" Initiative;
  
- The European Union is willing to send a further Troika mission before the end of this year to explain these decisions, to discuss their follow-up with the Government, SPDC, NLD and the ethnic nationalities and to explore the prospects for further measures, which could follow accelerated progress in Burma/Myanmar's national reconciliation process.

The Council agreed to reconsider the measures taken today, as well as the common position, at any time should developments in Burma/Myanmar, either positive or negative, so require.