

8

31st Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 6: Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Plenary on Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Oral Statement Delivered by Nwe Zin Win

**On behalf of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)**

Thursday, 17 March 2016

Mr. President. FORUM-ASIA and ISHR make this statement in solidarity with Equality Myanmar and Burma Partnership. We appreciate that the government has fully accepted 135 recommendations. However, we regret that it has noted and not accepted recommendations related to key human rights concerns including release of political prisoners, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, business and human rights, impunity and sexual violence in the context of armed conflicts.

While welcoming successful elections and the new government, we remain deeply concerned by the fact that 95 political prisoners are behind bars and 418 awaiting trial including Letpadan students and supporters who peacefully exercised their freedom of assembly. We note the government's acceptance of recommendations on human rights defenders and reiterate our call for the release of all political prisoners and the amendment of repressive laws such as Article 18 of the Peaceful Assembly Act; Peaceful Procession Act; News Media Law; and 2014 Printing and Publishing Law. Civil society and human rights defenders have an important role to play in ensuring genuine reforms, and need the space to safely conduct their work. The government's failure to accept many recommendations on ending violence and discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities including the Rohingya demonstrates lack of political will to improve the ongoing persecution against the minorities. We strongly urge the government to amend or repeal the 1982 Citizenship Act and Four Laws on Race and Religion.

Mr. President, we call on the government to ensure an inclusive, meaningful and participatory peace process with greater representation of women. Despite the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, civilians are left without protection in armed conflict, and human rights violations including rape and sexual violence against ethnic minority women continue without justice and remedies. The government must comply with Geneva Conventions, guarantee safety of civilians especially children and women in conflict areas and bring perpetrators of serious crimes including sexual violence to justice.

Finally, we urge the government to submit all outstanding and overdue state party reports to Treaty Bodies, and immediately accept pending requests for official country visits by the Special Procedure mandate holders and issue an open invitation. We further call on the government to publicly set out a comprehensive, measurable and time-bound action plan for the implementation of UPR recommendations, in full and meaningful consultation and cooperation with independent rights-based civil society.

Thank you Mr. President.