
POLITICAL MONITOR No.13

OFFICIAL MEDIA

POLITICAL DIALOGUE FRAMEWORK DISCUSSION SUCCESSFUL

A preliminary agreement has been reached on the revision of the framework for political dialogue at the meeting of Preparatory Subcommittee-1 for the Union Peace Conference, also known as the 21st Century Panglong Conference. The meeting was held at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Yangon on 12 June. The meeting included discussions on the points in chapters 7 and 8 of the political dialogue framework as well as miscellaneous chapters to be discussed by the Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) that have signed the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA). After the meeting, the Preparatory Committee for the Union Peace Conference Chairperson Dr Tin Myo Win said he was proud of the successful convention of the four-day meeting from 9 to 12 June. He said the success of the convention can be attributed to the well-preparedness for the framework review and the patience of the members of Subcommittee-1, Lieutenant-General Yar Pyay and the leaders of ethnic armed organisations. He also said the non-signatories to NCA would be invited again to participate in the framework review meeting to allow them to participate in the Union Peace Conference. "I believe that if the meeting can yield a positive result, Myanmar will reach the goal of peace, which the entire world is hoping for," he said. The Vice Chairperson of the Union Peace Conference Preparatory Subcommittee, Padoh Saw Kwe Htoo Win from Karen National Union (KNU), said the meeting was successful, that the framework is important to make political dialogue a success and that the framework focuses on peacebuilding, which is a national objective. He said ceasefire is fundamental to peacebuilding. "This sort of political issue is not just a problem taking place between the government and the ethnic minorities. It is a national concern, and it also concerns other groups," he said.¹

NON-SIGNATORIES HAVE FOUR OR FIVE PHASES TO PASS FOR PEACE CONFERENCE

Remaining ethnic groups who have not signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) will have 4 or 5 phases to pass to sit at the negotiation table on par with the earlier signatories, said the Secretary of the Preparatory Committee for the 21st Century Panglong Conference during a two day meeting held from 9 and 10 June. In an interview with the media, Preparatory Committee Secretary Hla Maung Shwe said the conference was expected to be held in late July or August. The purpose of the meeting was to set a precedent for the review of the amendment to the framework of the political dialogue, aiming to attract ethnic armed organisations which had yet to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Hla Maung Shwe quoted State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi as saying that the conference should focus on political dialogue directly related to peace, security, defence and federalism. According to the State Counsellor, the sooner the political dialogue reaches agreement, the sooner the task of nation building can be implemented. Political parties should organise a civil society forum to pool idea for other suitable agendas for the political dialogue, the Secretary cited the State Counsellor as saying. When asked about the negotiations with the ethnic non-signatories, Hla Maung Shwe responded that negotiations were under way to set dates for discussion with Wa and Mongla ethnic armed groups. The army has imposed some conditions on the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Arakan Army (AA) and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the secretary said, adding that they would explain those conditions to these ethnic armed groups.²

¹ The Dawn of Peace : Political Dialogue Framework Discussion Successful – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/GNLM2016-06-13-red.pdf> (GNLM) 13 June 2016 (p. 1)

² Catching up with NCA : Non-signatories to NCA have four or five phases to pass for peace conference – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/GNLM2016-06-12-red.pdf> (GNLM) 12 June 2016 (p. 1 & 2)

POLITICAL DIALOGUE FRAMEWORK TO BE AMENDED WITHIN NCA FRAMEWORK

A coordination meeting was held at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Yangon on 10 June to discuss the organisation of the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference. The meeting focused on how to amend the Framework for Political Dialogue within the framework of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement to suit the coming Panglong conference. Dr Tin Myo Win, Chairman of the Second Subcommittee for Preparation of the 21st Century Panglong Conference, briefed those in attendance on what State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi had instructed and the outcomes of the talks held in Chiang Mai earlier this month, saying that the talks focused on inviting non-signatories to the NCA to the conference. First Subcommittee Secretary-1 Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong quoted the State Counsellor as suggesting separate agenda for the peace talk and a civil society forum. The meeting was attended by 7 representatives from the 8 Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) which have signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. On the government side, eight delegates led by Lt-Gen Ya Pyae joined the meeting. According to Secretary Hla Maung Shwe, the 21st Century Panglong Conference is expected to be held in late July or August and attract ethnic armed groups who are yet to sign the agreement.³

C-IN-C RECEIVES JAPANESE DEFENCE MINISTER, EU MILITARY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received the Japanese Defence Minister Gen Nakatani on 6 June. The Senior General highlighted and stated that the main duty of the military is to defend the state and also responsible for ensuring stability, peace and unity of the country. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing added that the military is also obliged to contribute its physical and mental ability toward national development and that the Myanmar military will continue to exert efforts to guarantee stability and peace. Both sides discussed relations and current cooperation between the two armies, technical and monetary assistance provided by Japan and friendship and study tours. Concerning political reform, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said the success of a democratic government depends upon its policies and its ability to implement those policies, as well as upon the decisions made by the people. "Since 2010, Myanmar has trodden on a multiparty democratic path with a civilian government. Although Myanmar democracy is not up to the mark of international democratic norms, Myanmar is firmly walking on the democratic path in its own context," he said. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also received General Mikhail Kostarakos, Chairman of the European Union Military Committee and discussed ways to establish military relations between the armed forces of Myanmar and the EU for cooperation. They also discussed plans to provide the Tatmadaw with training, including UN peacekeeping training, as well as exchanges of visits and promoting military cooperation between the two sides.⁴

STATE COUNSELLOR AUNG SAN SUU KYI HOLDS TALKS WITH SINGAPOREAN PM

State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi held talks with visiting Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Credentials Hall of the President's House in Nay Pyi Taw on 7 June. During the meeting the two leaders discussed matters related to updating the avoidance of double taxation agreement inked in 1999, promoting investment, cooperation in the development of the tourism sector including direct flights to be operated from Singapore to major cities in Myanmar and increasing the availability of training courses at the Myanmar-Singapore Vocational Training Institute. They also

³ Reframing the Discussion : Political dialogue framework to be amended within NCA Framework – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/GNLM2016-06-11-red.pdf> (GNLM) 11 June 2016 (p. 1)

⁴ C-in-C receives Japanese Defence Minister, EU Military Committee chairman – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/GNLM2016-06-07-red.pdf> (GNLM) 7 June 2016 (p. 9)

held discussions on taking an active leadership role in the international arena and cooperation by Aung San Suu Kyi on behalf of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).⁵

INDIAN NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER CALLS ON MYANMAR LEADERS

President Htin Kyaw on 16 June received an Indian delegation led by the Indian National Security Adviser Special Envoy of the Indian Prime Minister Ajit Doval who is also the Minister of the Prime Minister's Office, at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw. They discussed issue related to collaborative efforts to maintain peace and stability in border areas, bilateral technology, transport, economic and trade cooperation, progress in the renovation and restoration of pagodas in the cultural zone of Bagan and the expansion of flight services between the two countries. Foreign Minister Aung San Suu Kyi also held talks with the visiting Indian National Security Adviser and discussed matters on cooperation in the agriculture and construction sectors, border affairs and strengthening bilateral ties.⁶

IDS TO BE ISSUED IN RAKHINE STATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH CITIZENSHIP LAW

Measures are being taken to enable those living in Rakhine State to apply for a type of citizenship card according to the 1982 Citizenship Law, according to the Director of Immigration and National Registration Department Win Lwin. He said the national verification certificates (NVCs) have been issued to 57 men and 69 women in Myebon and 41 men and 51 women in Kyaukpyu. In the case of Ponnagyun Township, coordination is still being made as the cards do not mention race and religion. No one has been issued with NVCs thus far. The scrutiny body will be reformed only after coordination with townselders and religious leaders. This being so, NVCs will only be issued to applicants from Myebeon and Kyaukpyu. Asked to further clarify on the Ponnagyun situation, Win Lwin said their location is not an IDP camp but merely an isolated, small village. According to Director Win Lwin, Immigration staff is helping locals fill out forms while the Kyaukpyu General Administration Department is providing assistance in the taking of ID photographs and their development. In Myebon, however, the taking and developing of ID photographs is being handled under local arrangements. When asked about the process of citizenship scrutiny, the Immigration director explained that as the first step, NVCs are issued to applicants, and that the second step is to start the process of scrutinisation of their citizenship. He added that the scrutinization process is conducted within the framework of the 1982 Citizenship Law, that if a baby was born to citizen parents, they will be a citizen, and that if a baby was born to naturalised parents, they may not be eligible to become a citizen.⁷

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

SSPP/SSA LEADER WILLING TO BROKER TALKS BETWEEN TNLA AND SHAN PEOPLE

The Chairman of the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) General Pang Fa, has indicated that the SSPP/SSA is willing to facilitate negotiations between the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and Shan people in northern Shan State. Speaking at the SSPP/SSA headquarters in Wanhai on 14 June during a meeting with civilians and monks, General Pang Fa, said that he will speak to the TNLA leadership to help solve problems that have occurred in the area.

⁵ State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi holds talks with Singaporean PM – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/GNLM2016-06-08-red.pdf> (GNLM) 8 June 2016 (p. 3)

⁶ Cooperation on Border Security : President U Htin Kyaw meets Indian National Security Adviser – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/GNLM2016-06-17-red.pdf> (GNLM) 17 June 2016 (p. 1)/ Union Foreign Affairs Minister Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets Indian National Security Adviser Mr Ajit Doval – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/GNLM2016-06-17-red.pdf> (GNLM) 17 June 2016 (p. 3)

⁷ Citizenship IDs to be issued in Rakhine State in accordance with Citizenship Law – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/GNLM2016-06-09-red.pdf> (GNLM) 9 June 2016 (p. 1)

“Right now, the TNLA and the government’s military are going to hold a discussion,” said Gen. Pang Fa whose group did not sign on to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) with the government last year and has continued to clash with Burma’s military. “The Restoration Council of Shan State [the Shan State Army South who signed the NCA with the government] will also have to talk with them,” he added. “Even though there has been fighting between us and the Burma army for 50 to 60 years we can find the way for negotiations. But, why the Shan and Ta’ang cannot, we live on the same land so we can talk to each other,” he explained. “Our enemy is laughing when they see us fighting each other”. “We have to think deeply about who created this problem. Don’t just look at it on the surface.” “What the Burma army has been doing is holding water in one hand and fire in the other,” Gen. Pang Fa explained. “This means they do not really want peace.” Fighting between the Burma army and ethnic armed groups in northern Shan State has caused thousands of people to flee their homes. Many of the refugees are currently sheltering in refugee camps in northern Shan State.⁸

PEACE CONFERENCE DEBATED IN CHIANG MAI

Preconditions will be set for the inclusion of three armed ethnic groups that have thus far been excluded from the peace process, according to government negotiators. Members of government’s peace team visited Thailand from June 3 for a meeting with most of the non-signatory groups that are members of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). The negotiators explained their plans for the government’s 21st-century Panglong Conference. A member of the government’s peace team Hla Maung Shwe, said the government is still trying to reach out to the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Arakan Army (AA) for talks. None of them attended the meeting in Chiang Mai. The three groups were excluded from talks held by the previous administration because of the MNDAA’s military offensive against government troops in Laukkai, the capital of the Kokang region, together with its allies the TNLA and the AA. The government did not recognise the three groups as negotiating partners as it deemed the attacks to be against the peace process and the country’s democracy. “I think we will have talks concerning preconditions for the three groups. There can be alternative ways to solve the problem,” Hla Maung Shwe said. Last month, Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing demanded at a press conference that the three groups refrain from engaging in fighting against the Tatmadaw and surrender their arms. Though the preconditions of the new government have not been laid out yet, Khin Zaw Oo, a member of the government’s peace team, said solutions would be sought in talks with the groups. Armed ethnic groups had asked then-president Thein Sein for political and military guarantees for the three groups before the signing of the ceasefire accord last year. But only eight out of 15 groups invited to sign the agreement did so. The government has also not yet set a date for a meeting with the Mongla and Wa forces based near the Myanmar-China border. Naing Han Thar, deputy leader of the UNFC, said they had told the government’s peace negotiators that they would pursue their all-inclusive stance for the peace process. “It depends on how the ruling [National League for Democracy] government can negotiate with the Tatmadaw leaders on the inclusion issue. If they accept our all-inclusive stance, it would be much easier to participate in the peace process,” he said. Concerns have arisen about whether the UNFC leaders will be able to persuade the TNLA and the MNDAA to participate in negotiations with the government, as they renewed their request to resign from the ethnic bloc last month. The groups said the UNFC had failed to provide them with military support while they were fighting with government forces. The UNFC has not decided yet how to respond to the request for resignation from the ethnic bloc.⁹

⁸ SSPP/SSA leader willing to broker talks between TNLA and Shan people – <http://english.panglong.org/?p=14389> (S.H.A.N.) 16 June 2016

⁹ Peace conference debated in Chiang Mai – <http://www.mmTimes.com/index.php/national-news/20675-peace-conference-debated-in-chiang-mai.html> (Myanmar Times) 6 June 2016

UNFC CALLS FOR INCLUSIVE PEACE

The United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) has adopted a policy to work together for an inclusive peace process, says Tun Zaw, the bloc's joint secretary. An extended meeting of the central executive committee of the UNFC, which is formed of nine non-signatories of last October's ceasefire, was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 1 to 3 June. "The eight ceasefire signatories are negotiating with the UNFC. Talks for all-inclusive peace talks will be held. All of us will work to ensure all armed groups are involved in the peace process. We will work together. It will be impossible if an armed group or organisation is left out," Tun Zaw said. "We have a common goal for a federal democratic union. To achieve this we must work together. Every state must have its own constitution. Inclusivity is of great importance for us. We need to negotiate with the ceasefire signatories about the schedule and the venue," Tun Zaw said. "It should be done before the so-called 21st-century Panglong conference. The non-signatories should observe the political dialogue framework before the conference is held. If they accept this, they can join the political dialogue. After that they can sign the national ceasefire agreement and we can go ahead," said Phado Saw Kwe Htoo Win, the Secretary General of the Karen National Union, which signed the ceasefire in October. Government peace negotiators will also hold talks with other non-signatories this month.¹⁰

KAYIN PARTIES AGREE UNIFICATION DRAFT

Ethnic Kayin political parties have drafted policies for cooperation and negotiating about political stances and alliances, according to their leaders. The Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party, United Karen National Democratic Party, Karen State Democracy and Development Party, Karen National Party and Karen People's Party have been trying to amalgamate since late 2015. General Secretary of the KNP Mann Kyaw Nyein said: "We still have to negotiate about political principles and an alliance. For example, the KNP is a member of the United Nationalities Alliance. The UNA wants a federal union but I don't know what the other alliances want. Although we are in different alliances, all parties are willing to unify." The KNP is also a member of the Federal Democracy Alliance. A draft to unify the parties has been produced and a meeting of six members from each party will be held in this month. Mann Aung Pyi Soe, Vice Chairperson of Phalon-Sawaw, a member of National Brotherhood Federation, said: "There are five parties. Four of them involved in three different alliances. Therefore, we have to decide which group to continue with. Or no alliance at all. We have agreed to work for a federal union." In other states, three Kachin ethnic parties and Chin parties are trying to unify.¹¹

CSOS DISCUSS NATIONWIDE LAND POLICY FOR REFUGEES

Civil society organisations on 8 June addressed land restitution for IDPs and refugees on a national level, rather than on a per-state basis. At the public forum, groups working with conflict-affected communities from all over the country pressed the government to start a discussion about refugee return and demanded the inclusion of all stakeholders in the decision-making process. The dialogue followed a two-day workshop organised by the Border Consortium and the Transnational Institute aimed at establishing a national platform for communities displaced by armed conflict. Representatives yesterday emphasised the need for a well-thought-out plan for people displaced by conflict who wish to return home. "If return is forced or not done carefully, [the returnees] will become internally displaced persons again," said Naw Blooming Night Zan, a member of the Karen Refugee Committee. Refugees remain concerned over security because most areas that the displaced fled from have become heavy militarised and are infested with landmines, according to

¹⁰ UNFC calls for inclusive peace –
<http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/unfc-calls-inclusive-peace> (Eleven Myanmar) 5 June 2016

¹¹ Kayin parties agree unification draft –
<http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/kayin-parties-agree-unification-draft> (Eleven Myanmar) 10 June 2016

the civil society groups. The CSOs urged the removal of mines and military bases. Military presence is often associated with human rights abuses, as human rights groups allege the armed groups and the Tatmadaw have been involved in rape, forced labour and civilian portering, as well as other abuses. “There are questions from refugees when we talk about going home: Is the military there, or are there landmines?” said Naw Blooming Night Zan. Many people who fled their homes have lost their land and don’t have much chance of getting it back after plots were confiscated for investment projects and military bases, said Sai Nor Hseng, a member of the Shan Youth Network. He added that no more permits should be granted for development projects as it threatens national reconciliation. “Land is very important for the people. It is their life. People abandoned their land because of conflict. When they go back, there is no home, no village,” he said. Even though Myanmar has a Land Use Policy, only a small section is devoted to the rights of refugees and it does not adequately protect them, according to the groups. In their statement, the 25 CSOs also recommended the return of all arbitrarily confiscated land to refugees. They also emphasised the need to respect customary land use and tenure systems in ethnic areas. The Karen National Union presented its extensive land policy in May and work is being done to draft similar policies in other ethnic areas.¹²

ANALYSIS

The government’s preparations to hold the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference is slowly gaining momentum with various meetings including the preliminary discussions on the framework for political dialogue as well as stakeholder’s meetings. The meeting will be one of the first major initiatives taken by the NLD government regarding the peace process though the success and outcome as well as the participants who will attend still remains unclear. The government will also need to seek the support of the Tatmadaw in this process and show flexibility in accommodating the stakeholders. Further more discussions on amending the current framework for political dialogue will be also be key the discussions at the Conference. At this crucial juncture in time, peace remains a priority for Myanmar and the holding of the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference will need strong commitment and sincerity by all but more importantly the leadership of the government and support of the military will be crucial to its success.

¹² CSOs discuss nationwide land policy for refugees –
<http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/20752-csos-discuss-nationwide-land-policy-for-refugees.html>
(Myanmar Times) 9 June 2016