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Burma/Myanmar

European Parliament resolution on Burma/Myanmar

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Burma, in particular its resolutions of 16 September 1999¹, 18 May 2000², 7 September 2000³, 16 November 2000⁴ and 4 October 2001⁵,
 - having regard to Common Position 96/635/CFSP of 28 October 1996 defined by Council on the basis of Article J.2 of the Treaty on European Union, on Burma/Myanmar⁶ and Council Common Position 2001/757/CFSP of 29 October 2001⁷ extending and amending it,
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 552/97 of 24 March 1997 temporarily withdrawing access to generalised tariff preferences from the Union of Myanmar⁸,
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2000 of 22 May 2000 prohibiting the sale, supply and export to Burma/Myanmar of equipment which might be used for internal repression or terrorism and freezing the funds of certain persons related to important governmental functions in that country⁹,
- A. whereas 27 May 2002 marks the twelfth anniversary of the general elections in Burma which gave Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) 82% of the parliamentary seats,
- B. whereas Aung San Suu Kyi, who entered into talks with the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in October 2000 to resolve the country's political problems, is still under house arrest,
- C. noting that in the light of the EU Troika's visit the Burmese military government has released 25 women prisoners,
- D. whereas there are still over 1,000 political prisoners in various jails in Burma, who are subject to various forms of mistreatment and torture and who have no access to adequate food and healthcare facilities,

¹ OJ C 54, 25.2.2000, p. 111.

² OJ C 59, 23.2.2001, p. 284.

³ OJ C 135, 7.5.2001, p. 283.

⁴ OJ C 223, 8.8.2001, p. 335.

⁵ OJ C 87 E, 11.4.2002, p. 263.

⁶ OJ L 287, 8.11.1996, p. 1.

⁷ OJ L 286, 30.10.2001, p. 1.

⁸ OJ L 85, 27.3.1997, p. 8.

⁹ OJ L 122, 24.5.2000, p. 29.

- E. whereas in November 2001 the UN General Assembly expressed its concern at the slow progress of the talks between the SPDC and Aung San Suu Kyi, urged the SPDC to increase confidence-building measures to ensure the irreversibility of the process towards democracy and deplored the continued human rights violations, particularly those directed against persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities and women in Burma, and the denial of religious freedom,
- F. noting that little progress has been made with regard to political reform,
- G. whereas the ILO mission to Burma in February 2002 was denied access to Aung San Suu Kyi and reported that the ruling military regime had 'effectively blocked international efforts to halt the army's use of forced labour', despite promises by the SPDC to eradicate this practice,
- H. whereas the EU Troika to Burma scheduled for December 2001 was finally able to visit in March 2002,
- I. whereas the Council is due to review its Common Position at the end of April 2002,
- J. whereas the visit to Burma by the UN Special Envoy Tan Sri Razali Ismail, also scheduled for March 2002, was postponed by the SPDC,
- K. whereas the UN Special Envoy to Burma, Razali Ismail, has also strongly criticised the slow progress of the dialogue between the junta and the democratic opposition,
- L. whereas the Burmese army is still continuing to perpetrate gross human rights abuses against the ethnic minority civilian population, such as the Arakan, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Shan and Mon peoples, including beatings, rape, destruction of food supplies, forced relocations, forced labour, torture, extrajudicial summary executions and disappearances,
- M. whereas in December 2001 in Oslo the ethnic minority leaders offered jointly to enter into a nationwide ceasefire and negotiate a peaceful political settlement with the NLD and the SPDC through a 'Tripartite Dialogue' based on the principles of the 1947 Panglong Agreement - equality, voluntary participation and democracy,
- N. whereas European investment in Burma is significant, particularly in the oil and gas industry,
- O. whereas all foreign investment in Burma takes place through military-backed companies,
- P. whereas the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions has called on oil and gas companies 'to cease investment in Burma while the use of forced labour continues',
- Q. whereas the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) has called for economic sanctions against Burma and has published a list of companies investing in Burma,

1. Welcomes the continued attention of the UN and the UN Special Envoy Razali Ismail to the talks between Aung San Suu Kyi and the SPDC;
2. Urges the SPDC to take advantage of the recent events in Burma to speed up the process of dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and move beyond the confidence-building stage;
3. Urges the SPDC to demonstrate convincingly its intention to bring about national reconciliation by initiating a broader dialogue and promoting further progress towards democratisation;
4. Urges the SPDC especially to respond to the offer to enter into a nationwide ceasefire and negotiate a political settlement by the ethnic minority leaders based on the principles of the 1947 Panglong Agreement;
5. Urges the SPDC to release Aung San Suu Kyi immediately and unconditionally from house arrest, and to stop the restriction of movement and association of other Burman or ethnic minority political leaders;
6. Welcomes the release by the SPDC of some political prisoners but urges the military government to release the more than 1000 remaining political prisoners without preconditions, starting immediately with those who have already completed their sentences;
7. Urges the SPDC to improve the appalling conditions in prisons and labour camps, and to ensure that prisoners have access to adequate food and healthcare facilities;
8. Stresses the need to implement strictly the law of October 2000 banning the use of forced labour and to ensure that this widespread practice is actually stopped, and urges the SPDC to allow the ILO to establish a permanent representation in Burma and create an ombudsman;
9. Calls on the Commission to ensure that support for humanitarian aid to the areas most in need is delivered without political interference by the military, and that international NGOs are involved;
10. Supports the EU's increased contribution to the UN's Joint Plan of Action Programme to combat the spread of AIDS in Burma/Myanmar;
11. Urges the SPDC to put an immediate end to all human rights violations committed by the Burmese army, the Military Intelligence Services, the police and other security forces, including the widespread practices of torture, forced relocations, forced labour, and extrajudicial and summary executions, and to bring those responsible to justice;
12. Wishes to facilitate and promote a conference of ethnic minorities to allow the latter to contribute to the consultations between the junta and the democratic opposition;
13. Calls on the Council to maintain the current sanctions against Burma in its Common Position and, in the event that further progress fails to be made in the next six months in the dialogue between the military junta and the democratic opposition, to strengthen economic sanctions and consider an investment ban;

14. Calls on the Commission to consider bringing the case of the continued widespread use of forced labour in Burma to the attention of the World Trade Organisation, which pledged in its Singapore Ministerial Declaration of December 1996 to renew its 'commitment to the observance of internationally recognised core labour standards';
15. Calls on the governments of India, China, Japan and the ASEAN countries to express themselves more explicitly in favour of promoting democratisation and reconciliation in Burma;
16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the ASEAN member states, the governments of India, China and Japan, the National League for Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi and the UN Secretary-General.