

ing which decided that in the case of municipalities, the decisions of municipalities must be based on local concerns that its citizens have and that international issues don't count. A strong argument can be made with the heroin link and that Burmese heroin is a local concern for municipalities. A paper on this issue will be coming out in a month in the University of Toronto Law Review.

There are grassroots alternatives such as consumer pressure tactics but which are only effective against products that are consumer-based and for example, against mining companies. There was a recent case in Ontario where Friends of Lubicon was being sued by a subsidiary of a Japanese company for launching a boycott against it. The courts ruled that there is nothing illegal about consumer boycotts and this ruling is a victory for all consumer activists across the country.

Lawsuits. California-based Unocal is being sued in that state for its business involvement in Burma. Could this be a success in Canada? We don't know yet but cases are being filed, particularly one in Montreal and if it is successful, then we can think about suing Canadian companies that are in Burma.

Shareholder activism. This is a very important issue though it is being de-emphasized in the Canadian environment. There is difficulty in getting Burma issues in front of shareholders meetings due to the legal environment. Canada has a far less liberal position than that of the US and the law is being considered for amendment. There are suggestions that the law should be liberalized but business lobby groups want to further restrict it. It would be good to see more human rights groups getting involved in this issue to counterbalance these lobby groups.

Codes of conduct are generally used to condition or moderate business behaviour overseas such as workplace labour standards (child labour). Few codes exist to condition when a company will be in a country and when it will decide to pull out. If companies don't have country guidelines which dictate that if a certain country has such bad human rights problems that the company will pull out, I feel then that codes of conduct are useless. In the case of Nortel, for example, Nortel explained that it doesn't have country guidelines because it doesn't want to offend the country it is in.

There are a couple of reports on these issues,

published by the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development if people would like to do further reading.

TOE KYI - Secretary General

Burmese Students Democratic Organization

I work as the Secretary General for the Burmese Students Democratic Organization (Canada). Our student organization was formed in December, 1997 at the First Conference of Burmese students in Canada. Our student organization consists of Burmese students who left Burma after the bloody military crackdown on the democracy movement and Burmese nationals who were committed to work on the restoration of democracy and human rights in Burma. The objective of our student organization is to restore democracy and human rights in Burma. As a student organization, we will put our priority on working to get freedom in the formation of student institutions in Burma.

I am glad to be here in Ottawa for the conference, and to have the chance to meet you all in one group, a rare opportunity. I believe this conference will be productive for our struggle for democracy and will certainly produce much closer relationships among our democratic forces, and other individuals and organizations working for democracy and human rights in Burma. So I want to give my special thanks to Canadian Friends of Burma for this opportunity and its generous help in supporting our struggle for freedom.

On behalf of Burmese Students' Democratic Organization (Canada), let me briefly express our opinion of the on-going political dilemma in Burma. You will see some different opinions relating to this political situation. Some people think the current political dilemma can be solved if another election is held, but it's totally unpractical. Recently, I heard Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, making a comment about holding new elections in Burma, in the hopes that this will solve the current political dilemma. If the news of Mr. Annan's comments are true, it would not be good news for the people of Burma. We (BSDO) are greatly concerned with this comment, as we can prove another election will not work. I want to suggest that the UN resolution on SLORC to recognize the results of the May 1990 elections, and transfer power to the elected people be implemented. Can