

Unlike the military's model of a centralized top-down system of government, we believe the people of Burma must decide what system of government they want. In the 1990 general elections, the people very clearly decided that they want a multi-party democracy. In the same way, the ethnic people of Burma must decide for themselves what they want in a future Burma. Some have said they want independence, others want a federal system. The NCGUB believes in a federal system but the ethnic people must decide for themselves.

That is why the NCGUB is promoting programmes through the Euro-Burma Office to enable the ethnic people of Burma to hold conferences and seminars to discuss amongst themselves what they want. After that, we hope the different ethnic people in each state can get together to determine their common future. At a still later stage, the various groups can get together to determine what kind of a nation they want. Only a genuine National Convention based on the participation of all the peoples of Burma can resolve Burma's problems. The Convention currently being held by the military which restricts participation and imposes the military's will on the people is not acceptable.

The NCGUB is also embarking on programmes to prepare for the future. We already have obtained funding from Sweden and the US for an independent Burmese economic research project for the development of Burma. We are in the process of locating and encouraging Burmese scholars to begin looking at various issues we will have to face in a future democratic Burma. We are also trying to set up scholarship programmes for Burmese students who have had their studies interrupted.

The participation of women of all ethnic backgrounds in the political process is also a key component of the NCGUB. Last year, a Karenni and Burman woman were able to attend the APEC meeting in Vancouver. This year, a Burman and Karen woman were included in the NCGUB delegation to Geneva. We plan to increase such participation by the women of Burma. We are beginning the process of re-building Burma.

I would, therefore, like to invite you to join us, the people of Burma, in looking for ways to strengthen and develop the democracy movement both inside and outside the country so that we can sustain the democratic system once change comes to Burma.