

Among the many points made were that: the government does not, as a matter of policy, condone human rights violations; the most essential and fundamental right is the right to food, clothing and shelter; priority continues to be given to the promotion of time-honoured values and traditions and to the rights of society as a whole; even though the plenary of the National Convention is not in session, the basic principles related to the question of power-sharing are being reviewed by "responsible persons"; unity among all national races (encompassing 135 ethnic groups) is of paramount importance for the maintenance of independence, preservation of sovereignty and the development of the nation; and the development of the border areas is one of the government's top priorities. According to the government, improvements have been made in such fields as transportation and communications, education, health, energy, agriculture, mineral exploration and mining, trade, and cooperatives and housing; the alleviation of poverty and the eradication of poppy cultivation remain priorities in the border regions; of the 16 armed groups, 15 have returned to the "legal fold"; and the government continues to extend an invitation to the Karen National Union (KNU) to return to the legal fold. The government stated that its national strategy to combat drugs and drug trafficking has two main components: first, to designate drug eradication and prevention a national duty; and second, to eliminate poppy cultivation by improving the standard of living of the national races. The government stated that: political parties may be established in conformity with the law; political parties with legal standing may carry on their work within the limits set in existing laws and the rules and regulations established by the government; and, public assemblies, large and small, are allowed unless they are used "as an excuse for political elements to manipulate large crowds and create chaos in the streets." The government stated that there have been no restrictions on Aung San Suu Kyi — social or otherwise — meeting with members of the NLD or foreign diplomats and the NLD continues to refuse to take part in a constructive political process. The government noted that it pursues an independent and active foreign policy; Burma [as Myanmar] was admitted as a full member to ASEAN in July 1997; and the government has conducted a dialogue with the UN since 1994 aimed at discussion of issues of mutual interest.

On the question of field missions, the government asserted that the reports of the previous SR, Yozo Yokota, only reproduced unfounded and unproved allegations derived from dubious politically motivated sources; as a consequence, the situation in the country was unjustly and negatively drawn and the authorities thus had to assess the situation as to whether visits by the SR would be beneficial to the country at this time. The government also asserted that with those and other points in mind there existed no valid ground for introducing a resolution on the situation of human rights in Burma at 1998 session of the Commission.

Resolution of the Commission on Human Rights

The 1998 Commission adopted by consensus a resolution on the human rights situation in Burma (1998/63). The Commission, *inter alia*: welcomed the cooperation extended by the government to the UNHCR and international NGOs with regard to voluntary repatriation and reintegration of returnees from Bangladesh; welcomed accession to the Women's Convention; welcomed the cooperation of the government with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy; welcomed the remission of sentences for some long-term prisoners and the holding of the Party Congress of the NLD in September 1997; noted the contact between the government and the NLD but regretted the failure of the government to enter into a substantive political dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi; expressed concern at continuing human rights violations, including summary/arbitrary execution, enforced disappearance, torture, abuse of women and children by government agents, arbitrary seizure of land and property, violations of the freedom of movement of people and goods, oppressive measures against ethnic and religious minorities, and widespread use of forced labour; expressed concern at severe restrictions on the freedoms of opinion, expression, assembly and association as well as restrictions on access to information; expressed concern at the absence of due process of law and the practice of arbitrary arrest and detention, the violations of the rights of women — especially refugees and internally displaced women as well as women belonging to ethnic minorities or the political opposition, and the continuing violations of children's rights and the rights of persons belonging to minorities, including the systematic programmes of forced relocations; expressed concern at the government's refusal to cooperate with the SR, the fact that most of the representatives elected in 1990 are still excluded from participating in the meetings of the National Convention, that one of the objectives of the National Convention is to maintain the participation of the armed forces in a leading role in the future political life of the country, and the restrictions placed on political leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi.

The commission called on the government to: guarantee an end of violations of the right to life and integrity of person; take urgent and meaningful measures to ensure the establishment of democracy based on the 1990 elections; take all appropriate measures to allow all citizens to participate freely in the political process; improve the conditions of detention; cooperate fully and without conditions with the relevant mechanisms of the Commission and, in particular, the SR; continue to cooperate with the Secretary-General and his representatives, ensure the safety and physical well-being of all political leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi; fulfil obligations under relevant international human rights instruments and consider becoming a party to the International Covenants on Human Rights as well the Convention against Torture and the Convention on the Status of Refugees; fulfil its obligations under ILO Conventions No. 29 and No. 87; end the enforced displacement of persons and other