

## THE LAST HURDLE TO SIGNING THE N.C.A. UNITY/ INCLUSIVENESS: 14+1 VERSUS 16+1

As the negotiations for the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) enters into its final stage, both the ethnic armed organizations and the government claim that the last remaining hurdle is – Which groups will sign the NCA? Other issues are said to be surmountable.



Behind the scenes – KNU Chair Saw Mutu consulting informally with President Thein Sein, and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

What then is the difference between the government's 14+1 formula and the United Nationalities Federal Council's (UNFC) or SD/NCCT's 16+1 formula?

### THE TWO CONCEPTS

Life would be simple if the government's 14 and the UNFC's 16 referred to the same groups.

Unfortunately, they do not. The two concepts can be broken down as follows:

Government's 14+1	4	9	1	1	0	0
UNFC's 16 + 1	0	9	1	1	3	3
	NDA NSCN-K RCSS UWSA	ALP CNF DKBA KNPP KNU KPC NMSP PNLO SSPP	ABSDF	KIO	ANC LDU WNO	AA MNDAA TNLA



## THE 14+1 FORMULA

The government's position is that it would like the NCA to be signed by the fourteen ethnic armed organizations that have bilateral ceasefires with the government plus the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) – thus 14+1. The government's 14+1 formula does not include 6 groups who are divided into two sets of 3:

**GROUP A** – The government is saying that ANC (Arakan), LDU (Lahu) and WNO (Wa) do not have significant armies and are not combatants. They can participate in the political dialogue without either a bilateral ceasefire or the NCA. The WNO also has a much larger counterpart in the UWSA. How the two Wa groups will reconcile and represent Wa State is something that still needs to be resolved amongst themselves.

**GROUP B** – The government claims that the AA (Arakan), MNDAA (Kokang) and TNLA (Ta-ang or Palaung) came into being only after the government started negotiating ceasefires with the others. As such, it feels that including them will encourage a proliferation of more groups. Further, the government claims that the AA is a creation of the KIO and is active mainly in KIO territory. It proposes that a ceasefire with the KIO could include the AA. Similarly, the TNLA is also seen as a KIO creation but given that it operates in northern Shan State, a separate bilateral ceasefire before allowing it to sign the NCA is being considered. The MNDAA's recent revival on 9 Feb 2015 with the attempt to reclaim Kokang is seen as a deliberate provocation to wreck the peace process and at the moment, the government is not open to any negotiations with the group.

## THE 16+1 FORMULA OR 16 PLUS

The UNFC's position or that of the Senior Delegation/Nationwide Ceasefire Coordinating Team (SD/NCCT), is that it wants all 16 members of the NCCT plus the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) to sign the NCA – hence 16+1. The UNFC's 16+1 'ethnic unity' or 'inclusiveness' formula does not include 4 groups – NDAA, NSCN-K, RCSS and UWSA. As far as

the UNFC is concerned, if these 4 want to sign the NCA, it is fine. But if they do not sign, it is also fine. The UNFC is mainly concerned with the 16+1 groups. The reason being that 11 of the 16 groups in the NCCT are members of UNFC and it is more concerned for the unity of its members, rather than the 'unity' of all the ethnic groups as a whole.



## EXCEPTIONS?

The UWSA (Wa) has the largest army – 30,000 men. It and the NDAA (Mong La) have had an unbroken ceasefire with the government for 26 years and see no reason why they need to sign the NCA which they did not negotiate. Given that they also participated in the National Convention which drafted the 2008 Constitution, it is likely that the government will agree to their demand that they be allowed to participate in the proposed political dialogue without signing the NCA. In such a case, the UWSA and NDAA will

likely remain on the Unlawful Organizations List.

The NSCN-K (Naga) wants a separate Nagaland that straddles the Myanmar-India border. It is unlikely that it will sign the NCA or participate in the political dialogue.

The RCSS (Shan) is neither a member of the UNFC nor the NCCT but it is ready to sign the NCA in order to get the political dialogue launched.

## OUTLOOK

The next step, will depend on whether or not the NCA draft can be finalized when the SD/NCCT next meets with the Union Peacemaking Work Committee in Yangon on 6 Aug. If it is finalized, the groups will have to decide whether or not to sign under what conditions – 14+1 or 16+1. Oth-

er issues about whether the President and the Commander-in-Chief will sign, what countries will be invited to witness the signing, can apparently be resolved. In any case, it is likely that the NCA will be signed by the end of the month – August 2015.

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