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21ST CENTURY PANGLONG PEACE CONFERENCE COMMENCES

The Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong kicked off with an opening ceremony at the Myanmar International Convention Centre in Nay Pyi Taw 31 August. The opening ceremony was attended by President Htin Kyaw, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, Vice Presidents Myint Swe and Henry Van Thio, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Win Myint, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice Senior General Soe Win, Deputy Speakers of Hluttaw, Union Ministers, the Union Attorney-General, the Chairman of Union Civil Service Board, Region/State Chief Ministers, senior military officers, commanders, chairs of Hluttaw committees, ministers for ethnic affairs, representatives from a stakeholder group representing the government, Hluttaw and Tatmadaw, representatives from ethnic armed organisations, representatives from political parties, representatives from ethnic minorities, Chairman of KNU Saw Mutu Sae Po and Vice Chairperson Naw Zipporah Sein, KKO Chairman Saw Mu Shae, Vice Chairman of KNU/KNLA-PC Saw Htot Lay, General Secretary Naw Kapaw Htoo, Sai Baung Khe of RCSS/SSA, PNLO Patron Khun Okkar and Chairman Khun Myint Tun, ALP central committee member Daw Saw Mya Raza Lin, ABSDF Chairman Yebaw Than Ge, Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong of CNF, Sam Lot of UWSA, Chairman Sai Lin of Mongla Special Region-4, KIO Vice Chairman N' Ban La, Vice Chairman 1 Maj-Gen Guan Maw, KNPP Vice-Chairman Khu Oo Reh and Phone Naing at the rank of Adjutant-General, SSPP/ SSA central committee member Sai Du, NMSP Vice Chairman Naing Hong Sar, diplomats from foreign embassies, officials from UN agencies, local and international NGOs and guests.¹

STATE COUNSELLOR MAKES CONCLUDING REMARKS AT PANGLONG CONFERENCE

The State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi expressed her words of thanks to the stakeholders at the 21st Century Panglong Conference, also known as the Union Peace Conference, which came to a successful conclusion on 3 September. Aung San Suu Kyi called the event a part of the peace process, stressing the need for constant efforts to keep up the momentum for peace and reconciliation. "Peace is not a thing to discuss during the conference. She encouraged the groups present to brave the future rather than being tied to the past, stressing that this resolution is not in the interest of individuals but for the benefit of the Union. To achieve peace is very difficult, she said, citing the challenges faced by other countries in their restoration of peace. Aung San Suu Kyi called for a sense of duty in the peace process, describing the conference as a precedent for the conferences to come. The State Counsellor hinted at preparation for national-level political dialogue right after the conference, including a forum by civil society organisations. She urged the representatives to the conference to play an honourable part in serving the interests of the people during their life span, instead of entertaining grudges toward one other. She described public respect and support as critical in the success of the peace conference, adding that no government can accomplish any task without public support. "Each day gives a new opportunity. We receive new opportunities every morning we get up. She called for parties to find ways to overcome differences through sympathetic interaction, saying that a government has a crucial obligation to prioritise the consent of the public. State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi urged all

¹ Giving Peace a Chance: State Counsellor describes Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong as magnificent opportunity for harmony – file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/1_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM) 1 September 2016 (p. 1 & 2)

participants to make the 21st Century Panglong Conference go down in the history of the country in the same way as the Panglong did in 1947.²

UNITED NATIONS SUPPORTS DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS AND IS READY TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE

United Nation Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon during his visit to Myanmar paid a courtesy call on State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. Discussions focused upon the United Nations' readiness to continue to support Myanmar's democratization process and socio-economic development, matters concerning human rights and humanitarian assistance, measures being taken for stability, peace and development of Rakhine State and the current and future co-operation between Myanmar and the United Nations. The UNSG expressed his overwhelming sorrow for the damages to ancient religious edifices caused by the earthquake as well as for the casualties and injuries of Myanmar people during the press briefing. He also expressed his belief that President Htin Kyaw and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi will be able to manage reconstruction activities. He went on to say that he has closely co-operated with Myanmar government and Myanmar people throughout his tenure, that he was delighted to have a chance to co-operate with Aung San Suu Kyi, that he has invariably supported her effort for achievement of democracy, that the whole world was amazed at Myanmar's reform process, that he was delighted to see Myanmar people actively participating in last November election, and that President Htin Kyaw led government is treading on the democratic path in a peaceful manner. He then congratulated people from business and political sectors and military and Civil Society Organizations on their co-operation. He also acknowledged the challenges being posed for peace and national reconciliation. Furthermore, he congratulated the attendees of the 21st century Panglong on their patience and co-operation. Regarding the latest development of Rakhine State, he noted that there are challenges in handling this issue as the situations in Rakhine State is subtle and confusing, that he and the state counsellor are of the opinion that everybody prefers a better socio-economic status regardless of race and religion, that the international community is concerned over the difficult living of thousands of internally Displaced Persons, and that all people should have equal opportunity. When asked about challenges in Rakhine State, the UNSG replied that the situations and challenges in Rakhine State are complicated and subtle, that the issues are rather deep and they are all based on social and economic matters. He also expressed his delight over the formation of the Rakhine commission led by ex-UNSG Mr Kofi Anan. He said to the journalist that the social-economic status of Rakhine people is rather low and that the internally displaced persons need humanitarian assistance.³

UNSG HOLDS TALKS WITH PROMINENT FIGURES OF ALL FAITHS

A meeting between UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arriving in Myanmar and met prominent figures of all faiths on 31 August. Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura Aung Ko and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivered the opening speeches at the meeting. During the discussion, prominent figures of all faiths in Myanmar mentioned that Myanmar people need to co-exist peacefully and harmoniously with forgiveness and patience for the peace and stability of the country; to promote peace and unity for future generations; to encourage younger generation to observe faithfully their respective religion. The meeting was concluded by Foreign Affairs Minister Kyaw Tin by expressing that the meeting would contribute in some way to our on-going efforts to build a more harmonious, peaceful and prosperous society.⁴

² The Heart of the Nation: State Counsellor Calls for Constant Efforts to Keep Up Momentum for Peace and Reconciliation – file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/4_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 4 September 2016 (p. 1 & 2)

³ United Nations Supports Democratization Process and Is Ready to Provide Assistance – file:///C:/Users/resea/AppData/Local/Temp/31_Aug_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 31 August 2016 (p. 1 & 3)

⁴ UNSG holds talks with prominent figures of all faiths – file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/1_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 1 September 2016 (p. 2)

POLITICAL DIALOGUE FRAMEWORK SET TO BE FINALIZED PRIOR TO NEXT CONFERENCE

A framework for political dialogue is set to be finalized before the second round of the 21st Century Panglong Union Peace Conference, according to a press conference on the third day of the ongoing conference in Nay Pyi Taw on 2 September. Retired Lt-Gen Khin Zaw Oo said that the political dialogue framework will be finalized before the next conference where a common ground will be sought for discussions on the agenda items at national-level political dialogues. The organizing committee is responsible to compile discussions and submitted a set of discussions to the next conference, he added. Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong said that United Nationalities Federal Council, a coalition of seven ethnic armed organizations who have not signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement yet, presented a paper on its policies to the third-day session of the conference. Five representatives from the UNFC read out the paper at the conference as each representative of an organization or individual member was given only 10 minutes, he added. UNFC held a meeting with the subcommittee-2 of the 21st Century Panglong Union Peace Conference preparatory committee last month and made an eight-point proposal for signing the NCA. In connection with the eight-point proposal, Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong said that the responsibility rested with the government, the army and the United Nationalities Federal Council. "The government or the UNFC or the Delegation for Political Negotiation should be contacted for that issue." Sai Kyaw Nyunt described the peace conference as effective to the peace process, expressing praise for the constructive approach taken by the government and the army. Remaining organisations will present their policies on the last day of the 21st Panglong Conference, with officials saying that the Joint Committee will adopt a framework for the national-level political dialogue after taking into consideration the proposals made by respective organisations. Sai Kyaw Nyunt described varied voices at the conference as challenges, but he added that these challenges can be taken as advantages. According to him, this will prompt stakeholders to find a way out of the diverse opinions on the establishment of a democratic federal union. The third-day session of the 21st Century Panglong Conference was followed by a press conference, in which retired Lt Gen Khin Zaw Oo, Hla Maung Shwe and Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong, Zaw Htay and Sai Kyaw Nyunt responded to the queries raised by the correspondents.⁵

MON STATE PRIMED FOR PANGLONG

Eleven potential frameworks for the building of a federal state which emerged from a Mon National Conference, held in Kyar-in-Seikgyi Township, Kayin State will be presented at the 21st Century Panglong Conference, Myitmkha News Agency has been informed. The Mon National Conference took place between 22 to 24 August, and was attended by over three hundred stakeholders from Mon political parties and civil society organizations. "I believe the eleven points which have emerged from this conference represent the collective voice of Mon people as the conference was attended by all layers and groups of Mon society and political parties," said Dr Aung Naing Oo, Deputy Speaker of Mon State Hluttaw. As well as 14 representatives from the New Mon State Party permitted to attend the Panglong Conference, members of other Mon State political parties will also reportedly be present at the landmark peace talks. The main frameworks to come out of the conference included legislation for a federal union; the division of power between states and the federal union; equality in the fundamental human right of democracy; the employment of a democratic multi-party system; and the establishment of a federal tribunal court. "We'll lay down our arms if our desires are met. Please give us a replete set of rights. We'll discuss our desires [at the Panglong Conference]. We're prepared to be part of a unified Tatmadaw (Armed Forces), a [Mon] state guard force under the national army — we don't want to live in the jungle [anymore]. That's why we fully support the Panglong Conference. We have high expectations," said U Naing Win Hla, member of the New Mon State Party's central executive committee. The New Mon State Party informed local media that after waiting for 60 years

⁵ Political dialogue framework set to be finalized prior to next conference –
file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/3_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 3 September 2016 (p. 6)

they are extremely glad the National League for Democracy-led government has finally implemented a second Panglong Conference and that they fully support the conference in bringing about peace within Myanmar.⁶

ANALYSIS

The much publicised and highly anticipated 21st Century Panglong concluded after 4 days but without any significant outcome. However, the live TV coverage of the proceedings was welcomed by the participants. This was the first time in more than fifty years that they have been able to express their desires and pent up aspirations to a national audience without fear of being arrested and put in prison. The Conference is the first major initiative taken by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi since coming to power and provided opportunities to stakeholders involved in the peace process. The government has pledged to convene similar conferences every 6 months though the exact agenda and issues to be discussed at these meetings remain unclear. However, the recently concluded Panglong Conference must and should be seen more as one of the first steps towards genuine peace and much more remains to be done. Many have questioned and debated the convening of the Conference and to its objectives and goals. It is important to understand Myanmar's civil war and conflicts have been ongoing for over half a century and that if there is to be progress to achieve national reconciliation the true spirit and genuine spirit of the Panglong Agreement signed in 1947 should be honoured and implemented. More importantly, the Panglong Agreement is a legal document which needs to be accepted and a major factor and necessity is that the original co-owners of this agreement should have the same rights and treated equality. It therefore is crucial for the authorities to adopt and implement measures which aims to promote these goals and that all stakeholders involved irrespective of their origin, ethnicity, religion, race or culture be granted equal status and rights.

⁶ Mon State primed for Panglong – file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/1_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 1 September 2016 (p. 6)

Appendix:

21st CENTURY PANGLONG COMMENCES IN NAY PYI TAW

The Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong commenced on 31 August at the Myanmar International Convention Centre in Nay Pyi Taw, with an opening address by Preparatory Committee Chairman Dr Tin Myo Win, who chaired the event. Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong read out the implementation report of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC).

According to the UPDJC report, an agreement has been reached to start a national-level political dialogue right after the 21st Panglong, an action which won approval at the recent Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting this month (JICM). Lt-Gen Yar Pyae clarified the undertakings of the Joint Monitoring Committee at union, state/region and local levels, focusing on the committee's achievements in the lessening of tension among NCA signatories. He stressed the need for continuous measures to enhance stability to reduce aggression and build trust among armed groups, adding that these endeavours would facilitate the political dialogue which would pave the way for federalism.

Sai Kyaw Nyunt, Joint Secretary General of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) urged all groups to exert more concerted efforts for the inclusion of the armed groups missing in the peace conference and display a strong sense of magnanimity in the establishment of a framework for political dialogue that would shape federalism. An agreement has been reached to continue reviewing the framework for Political Dialogue right after the 21st Century Panglong, he added.

Pado Saw Kwal Htoo Win said a review of the political dialogue framework would follow the 21st Panglong under the guidance of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee. The national-level political dialogue will be conducted as agreed in the framework of political dialogue with participation of representatives from the government, the parliament, the military, ethnic armed organisations, political parties and civil society organisations. An official read out the specific rules and regulations to be followed by the participants at the conference.⁷

KEYNOTE REMARKS MADE AT OPENING OF 21st CENTURY PANGLONG CONFERENCE

Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong commenced in Nay Pyi Taw at the Myanmar International Convention Centre in Nay Pyi Taw on 31 August. Following are the remarks of Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Win Myint, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the Kayin National Union Saw Mutu Sae Po, Vice Chairman of the Kachin Independence Organization N' Ban La, Patron of the National League for Democracy Tin Oo and Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon made at the opening ceremony of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong.⁸

⁷ 21st Century Panglong commences in Nay Pyi Taw –

file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/1_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 1 September 2016 (p. 2)

⁸ Remarks made at opening of the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong –

file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/2_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 2 September 2016 (p. 3)/

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker blames lack of peace for socioeconomic deprivation in ethnic regions –

file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/2_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 2 September 2016 (p. 3)/

Secretary-General's remarks at the 21st Century Panglong Conference in Myanmar –

file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/2_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 2 September 2016 (p. 6)/

Greetings extended by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the Union Peace Conference –

file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/2_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 2 September 2016 (p. 3 & 4)/

KNU Chairman Saw Mutu Saw Po Addresses Opening of Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong –

file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/2_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 2 September 2016 (p. 4)/

UNFC Chairman U N' Ban La Addresses Opening of Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong –

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Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Win Myint

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Win Myint addressed the opening of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong Conference in Nay Pyi Taw on 31 August. The speaker said that State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi had anticipated calling a Panglong-like conference over the last 28 years in a move to forge national reconciliation. Her guidelines focused on greater autonomy for ethnic regions to encourage economic development, the sharing of profits gained from the exploitation of natural resources and an end to entrenched political divisions, he recalled. The restoration of peace correlates with the success of democracy, human rights, rule of law, national reconciliation, federalism and national development, he said. The loss of life and limb in internal armed conflict leaves a big hole in the country's human resources, he said, adding that heavy defence spending presents a delay in the measures for national development. Speaker Win Myint said the spirit of fraternity can overcome the differences entrenched among ethnic groups, thereby paving the way for enduring peace. The speaker emphasised the need for cooperation among the ethnic groups in turning the country into a place free from prejudice and discrimination. He urged the representatives to the peace conference to put an end to the bewildering array of political, economic and social problems weakening the national consolidation.

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than delivered a welcoming address at the Union Peace Conference- 21st Century Panglong in Nay Pyi Taw on 31 August. In his address the Speaker said the lack of peace and stability had caused the country to lag behind its neighbouring countries in terms of socioeconomic development. Armed conflicts had engulfed our national brethren, especially in ethnic regions, thereby forcing residents to abandon their homes and bear the brunt of socioeconomic deprivation as internally displaced persons. Images on the media that reflect the plight of the victims, including children, have strengthened the public desire for peace, which he said is now just "at an arm's length". He urged the participants at the peace conference to display a strong determination for peace and act with sympathy toward the plight of the victims as their own grandparents, parents, siblings, children and relatives. The speaker called for the adoption of the Union Spirit in discussion and negotiation, describing peace as an essential step towards the establishment of a federal republic. He called the historic event unparalleled, urging the leaders of ethnic groups and institutions to write a new page of history in the restoration of peace at this opportune moment of the 21st Century Panglong as part of fulfilling the greatest wish of the people.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon

In his address, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the Conference was a historic occasion for the further democratization of the country. The symbolism of this Conference is clear from its title, which recalls the spirit of the original Panglong Conference convened in 1947 by General Aung San, the Father of Modern Burma. The conference is bringing together Myanmar's different ethnic groups in a joint commitment to a federal union based on equality, democracy and self-determination and congratulated all sides for the patience, endurance, determination and spirit of compromise you have demonstrated in support of national reconciliation. He added that there is a long road ahead, but the path is very promising and this is the first time that such a peace process has been initiated in the seventy-year history of conflict and division between the Union Government and armed ethnic groups. The Conference marks a historic transition since former President Thein Sein opened the doors to democratic reforms six years ago and Myanmar shows what is possible, when leaders listen to their people's genuine aspirations, genuine concerns of the people and genuine

dreams of where this country should proceed. In this regard, the United Nations stands ready to support Myanmar's reforms, in particular the national reconciliation process.

Ban also highlighted the long civil war has cost numerous lives and robbed successive generations of their dignity, tranquillity and normalcy. It is now clear that there can be no military solution to your differences. He stated that no party involved in this reconciliation process can expect to achieve all its aims. Conversely, every side must win something if the process is to succeed. This will require goodwill on all sides, and a recognition that success is in the vital interest of all the people of Myanmar, regardless of ethnicity, religion, political affiliation or socio-economic status.

It is encouraging that the different ethnic armed organizations with divergent interests and aspirations came together to form a single team to negotiate the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement last year. This agreement was crucially important, and the new Government has undertaken efforts to make it more inclusive. The 21st Century Panglong Conference represents the result of those efforts. I urge all of you, as you walk along this path with Aung San Suu Kyi, to demonstrate the wisdom needed to address complex and unresolved issues, and to pave the way for a unified negotiation track that is inclusive of all interests and constituencies. This will require sensitivity and flexibility, and respect for both signatories and non-signatories. You will need to be truly consultative if you are to reach sustainable solutions. In this connection, I urge you again to ensure that women make up at least 30 per cent of the representatives at all levels of dialogue.

Distinguished delegates, every transition [carries] risks. But refusing to embark on transition may carry the greatest risk of all. We see tragic evidence of this around the world. I urge you all to continue to face up to your responsibilities, particularly to the youth and children of Myanmar – the future of this wonderful country. You owe it to them to work for a better tomorrow, in which they can fulfil their dreams and aspirations in peace and prosperity. In conclusion, Ban said that during his meetings with the authorities and with representatives of the wonderfully diverse people of this country, he always found inspiration in your determination to advance towards reform, peace and stability.

Commander-In-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing welcomed the participants here and all the national brethren for their well-being, peace, happiness and auspiciousness. While the country has regained her independence over 68 years ago peace, stability and progress had not been achieved and that the main reason behind this regrettable misfortune is the lack of "internal Peace" or in other words the absence of nationwide peace and stability and it is an undeniable fact. Leaders of the past successive periods had tried their best to restore internal peace. Although their adopted strategies and tactics may differ from one another, they all were striving towards the single end and that is "to bind the entire nation with strong bonds of unity". Even though they could not achieve complete unity and peace and stability for various reasons, however there were era wise milestones erected by those leaders in order. The signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement-NCA and the holding of today's Union Peace Conference are the positive results of the multiparty-democracy-era endeavours to restore eternal peace.

The Senior General added that the Tatmadaw (the Armed Forces) is an ardent participant and supporter in establishing State peace and unity all along the successive periods. Although there are different in convictions, visions and views, may be our actions are firm and unwavering and based entirely on the strong will "to restore peace at all cost". Those who are really suffering from the disadvantages of war and the awful consequences of the lack of peace are no other persons than the Tatmadaw personnel as well as the armed ethnic brethren who faced hardships and made sacrifices in terms of blood, sweat and life. We need to end this tragic drift at the present in our tenure. In all seriousness, I believe we all can successfully implement our peace process with the strength of unity and that the Tatmadaw's stands firm to uphold the "the spirit of restoring peace without fail". The

Tatmadaw is cooperating with all groups in the current national reconciliation and peace-making processes, based on our three main causes and three essential policies to include peace and stability, national unity and the development of the people, which are essential for the country. our Tatmadaw will contribute the utmost efforts in implementation of such process. We will negotiate in every possibility. Both sides should follow the six-point peace policy adopted by the Tatmadaw as its drafting is based on our experiences throughout the history. Mutual cooperation and following these basic points would help us in bringing a genuine and lasting peace to the country, thereby further cementing the national reconciliation and peace processes.

All organizations will have their own objectives and policies in translating objectives and policies into practice, there may be instances in which wishes cannot be totally fulfilled. I would like to urge all groups to review these matters correctly, based on history, experience, national characteristics, changing geo-political conditions and changing regional and international affairs.

Since the 2010 General Elections, our country has been exercising democratic culture and practices in order to firmly stand as a multi-party democracy country. To be able to march forward the Democratic track, the state power has been transferred to the new elected government since 2011. As of now it is in five years second term after the successful previous five years' term. In this connection, the requirements need to claim politically through government and parliaments. Regards to it, our citizens can enjoy freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of expression and the rights to form organizations, which are the fundamental principles of democracy on an extensive scale.

In an environment where everything goes according to democracy, all groups need to earnestly notice the fact that putting personal desires at the first place by holding arms to struggles, racism and localism go against the democracy. At present, we are marching on the track of Multiparty Democracy system. Since, this path had been selected in accordance with the desire of the people, we need to maintain the stability and make it stronger. We have to enhance the further progress of our country through peace and tranquillity by learning the lessons from experiences of some democratic countries.

The Commander-in-Chief stated that the Tatmadaw understood the anxieties of all National races and Ethnic Armed Groups. Our common desire is to ensure in achieving equal social lives of our nationalities. To progress the living standards of our society harmoniously, we have to live in peace by doing good things. We will not differentiate and take accounts on the sizes of the States, Regions and rates of populations and natural resources values and diverse of people's socio-economic but we will make every effort to share the delights from the benefits of equalities among all the national races. However, it will take time and to hold open and frank discussions to find out solutions.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said that the conference is the outcome of frequent discussions held many months ago as well as various meetings and mutual-trust-building activities. The advantage we have today is the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement-NCA unanimously approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (the Union Parliament) in December 2015. Most of the contents in the agreement were mainly based on demands of ethnic organizations who participated all along the way in drafting the agreement. So, my advice is to firmly keep the NCA as the baseline principle of the Union Peace Conference, the 21st Century Panglong Conference and further meetings. Moreover, I would like to urge all to implement the peace process in a short time by constantly serving the interest of the State and ethnic people with genuine goodwill. It is because if the peace process takes longer than the appropriate time, there may be more outside instigations, interferences and manipulations disturbing the process. In consequence, the already agreed mutual trust may lose and some frictions may occur. All of us in this conference room are bearing a heavy burden and the entire nation's expectation on us is high. The people have also recognized us as the persons who will accomplish the mission of national reconciliation and peace processes without any racism, localism and dogmatism. To be able to fulfil the aspiration of the people, I firmly believed that we will able to hold discussions and meetings to reach agreements on eternal peace. The strength of Union lies only within. As far as all our ethnic

racers are brethren, we have to hold discussions regarding with our diversities by taking base on union spirit to sort out the solutions. I firmly believe that we will overcome the concerns and suspects through building the trust and understandings. To conclude my remarks here, I would like to highlight the two points to be kept in our hearts for the success of the national reconciliation and peace process are firstly “Practicing the National Reconciliation Strategy in continuously” and second one is “Genuine desire to achieve everlasting peace.

KNU Chairman Saw Mutu Sae Po

Chairman of Karen National Union Saw Mutu Sae Po said that ethnic armed groups are very excited to take part in a political dialogue scheduled to be held after the conference, and supported the 21st Century Panglong Union Peace Conference, expressing hope that a democratic federal Union could be built through the 2016 Panglong in the same way that the 1947 Panglong led the nation to independence. The KNU Chairman highlighted the importance of peace, national reconciliation and constitutional amendments for ensuring a harmonious development of a society, citing that there can be no peace without national reconciliation and there can be no national reconciliation without reaching agreements and developing procedures to amend the constitution. He expressed his belief that the Union Peace Conference held this January following the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was the ribbon cutting for a political marathon and the 21st Century Panglong Union Peace Conference was the sound of whistle blowing to start the long race. Despite the NCA not being perfect, it has acted as a bridge that connected all stakeholders into a political dialogue, said the KUN Chairman, adding that the common goal is peace. He pointed out the need to lay down a work programme involving peace, national reconciliation and constitutional amendment in the country’s peace process, calling for parallel implementation of the three sectors. He stressed the need to develop a roadmap for emergence of a democratic federal Union and to bridge the remaining gap between stakeholders on establishment of a democratic federal Union. He suggested that guidelines that are suitable to the real situations of regions and states should be drawn up after development of a political dialogue framework as Union-level meetings are set to be held after the conference. He said that the 2008 Constitution has forms of a federal system but its essence is weak, adding that now is the time to realise a constitutional amendment after seeking a compromise on different goals of a federal system with political dialogue. He highlighted the importance of reducing fighting, dealing with resettlement of internally displaced persons with goodwill and developing humanitarian assistance programmes as a gesture of building trust among all stakeholders. He called for a ceasefire and establishment of a new political culture. He suggested listening to the voices of political parties that won no seats in the general elections, CSOs and other stakeholders and allowing them to take part in the upcoming political dialogue. In his conclusion, the KNU Chairman called for making a resolution to build a new, peaceful and harmonious society.

UNFC Chairman U N’Ban La

Chairman of the United Nationalities Federal Council and Vice Chairman of Kachin Independence Organisation N’Ban La thanked those concerned for organising the conference that brought all stakeholders to work together toward the establishment of a democratic federal Union inspired by putting an end to decades-long armed conflicts. He expressed his view that the Panglong Agreement, emboldened with Panglong spirit and pledges, was a real milestone for the country that causes it to stand taller in the world despite the fact that the agreement did not include all and a federal Union that provide ethnic minorities with democracy, equality and self-determination has not been realised yet. He affirmed that no ethnic group wants to secede from the country but want to establish a democratic federal Union on mutual understanding, cooperation and respects. He stressed the need to seek a compromise through negotiations at the first conference and in future without making the Panglong spirit or agreement weaker. He called for qualities of endurance, goodwill, mutual trust, understanding and forgiveness. It is high time to strive to shape the future of the country which is still

poor despite its abundant natural resources, he said. He also emphasised the need to uphold the interests of the people and highlighted the importance of equality to move all stakeholders to work together.

NLD Patron Tin Oo

Patron of the NLD Tin Oo in his address, said the purpose of organising the peace conference was to restore peace and order so the country can be rebuilt as a free, just, developed nation. "It is high time that the people of Myanmar enjoyed a better quality of life," Tin Oo said, urging the delegates from different groups to enter their discussions at this meeting with honesty, righteousness, mutual respect, love and sympathy. Collectively, he said, they can create a safe and secure society for the citizens of Myanmar. "The people living in the conflict areas have had bitter encounters since independence," he said, describing the loss of trust among the national brethren as one of the most damaging results. "The establishment of the country as a federal republic is impossible in the absence of mutual understanding and trust," he pointed out.

Tin Oo stressed the need for strong legal protection for human rights and equality to maintain and enhance mutual trust. The rise of federalism will enable the people of all states and regions to enjoy peace, harmony and rule of law, he said. "A single gunshot not only takes a human life, but it also deprives a society of its rule of law, peace and development," the patron said, calling for a ceasefire to end the social degradation of the entire population. He also called for the transformation from fierce fighting to heated negotiation at the peace conference. The search for a resolution to the disagreements is through coordination and persistence and considered the 21st Century Panglong Conference to be a crucial political opportunity for the leaders of the ethnic groups to renew their efforts in nation building, describing the unity among political and social leaders in the restoration of peace as "undeniable." He pointed out the need for more prosperous regions to help the less-developed ones to ensure equitable development, which he described as the essence of federalism.

THE 21ST CENTURY PANGLONG CONFERENCE CONCLUDES

The Union Peace Conference- 21st Century Panglong Conference concluded on 3 September at the Myanmar International Convention Centre-2 in Nay Pyi Taw. The conference was chaired by Lt-Gen Yar Pyae representing the army, Dr Tin Myo Win representing the government, Daw Shila Nan Taung representing the parliament, U Khun Myint Tun representing the ethnic armed organisations and U Myint Soe representing the political parties.

Discussions on Final Day of the Conference

- Government representative Aung Kyi said they had been working in harmony in the peace process to prevent further losses and sufferings incurred by the armed conflict. He described the improvement of social welfare as an essential prerequisite to enduring peace, calling for private participation in helping enhance economic development in soon to-be-peaceful regions under the guidance of the government.
- U Ngai Sark of the Chin National League for Democracy said the 2008 Constitution does not reflect the federal system just because it provides power sharing in the executive, legislative and judicial branches, in addition to its characteristics of Amyotha Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw, State/Region Hluttaw and Election Tribunal. He called for a federal system that guarantees justice, equality and self-administration and protects racial, religious and political rights of the ethnic minorities.
- Col Kyaw Soe Oo pointed out that the region/state governments should employ skilled workers to systematically develop human resources in the fields of legislation and management. He proposed an adoption of a tax system alongside budget allocations that will favour justice, equity and sustainable development.

- Member of Parliament Thein Swe called for unity among the parliamentarians in their line of duty for peace, reconciliation and development to facilitate the emergence of a democratic federal union that promises freedom, justice and self-administration.
- Aye Min of the Dawei Nationalities Party stressed the importance of prescribing the exact percentage of taxes and budget allocations for specific sectors, saying that the central government should not control economic activities across the country.
- Col Zaw Win Tun urged the government at all levels to provide greater transparency in all new exploitations of natural resources and introduce decentralisation as appropriate. He also pointed out the need for the related ministries to modify their laws as part of the effort to overcome the challenges in the current management of natural resources.
- Zaw Htay of the group of the intelligentsia spoke of resource inequality among ethnic regions, stressing the need for tax sharing, resource sharing and responsibility and accountability sharing in the enhancement of national identity.
- Khun Soe Myint of the Pa-O National Organisation said their Pa-O self-administered zone should be upgraded to a state in line with the law that allows the emergence of new states.
- Col Nay Lin Tun called the Tatmadaw the most important defence institution of the country, stressing that all armed organisations should be placed under the command of the Tatmadaw. The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) processes would take three to five years to be accomplished, he said.
- Khet Htein Nan, an ethnic representative, called ceasefire the top priority as continued fighting would harm the peace process and lose public interest and participation. He attached importance to freedom, justice and equality in the establishment of a federal union after the political dialogue.⁹

⁹ 21st Century Panglong Conference concludes successfully –
file:///C:/Users/resea/Desktop/4_Sept_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM/MOI) 4 September 2016 (p. 3)