



## What is Panglong?

By Harn Yawnghwe

Some people say Panglong is not important. Some say it is a myth. Some say that it is better to use *Panglong Spirit* instead, since the actual Agreement says so little. While yet others say that what is important is the *promises* of Panglong.

Who is right? On 14 May 1948, the State of Israel became a nation. They fought neighbouring countries to gain their independence. But the key document that supported their claim for independence was the *Balfour Declaration of 1917*.

What was this document? It was a letter from the British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Walter Rothschild, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Rothschild, stating British intent to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This letter in effect recognized the right of Israel to exist as a sovereign state.

Similarly, the Panglong Agreement of 1947 may say very little. But what it signifies is that on 12 February 1947, four independent sovereign nations signed an agreement to cooperate in the founding of a new nation – the Republic of the Union of Burma. The new nation became independent on 4 January 1948.

This means that the peoples of the Chin & Kachin Hills, and the Federated Shan States are equally co-owners of the Republic of the Union of Burma, as much as the peoples of British Burma.

Panglong, therefore, is the legal document that recognizes that the co-owners have the same rights which unfortunately, they have been denied since 1948.

What the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference needs to do is to acknowledge that the Republic of the Union of Myanmar was founded by the peoples of the Chin and Kachin Hills; the Federated Shan States; the independent Karenni States; and British Burma.



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