

**Statement by Professor Dr. May May Yi,
Advisor for Women's Affairs at the Prime Minister's Office
and Leader of the Delegation of Myanmar to the Thirty-Sixth Session of the Committee
on the Rights of the Child (Geneva, 26 May 2004)**

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the delegation of Myanmar and on my own, I would first of all like to express our appreciation to you for having invited us to the Thirty-Sixth Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child at the time Myanmar National Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is being considered. My delegation is composed of senior officials from various ministries concerned who are here with me today and together we look forward to working closely with you in our common endeavour to find ways and means to promote the welfare of children. Before proceeding any further, I would like to introduce the members of my delegation:-

1. His Excellency U Mya Than
Ambassador, Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Myanmar, Geneva
2. U Sit Myaing
Secretary of the National Committee on the Rights of the Child, and Director-General of the
Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement
3. U Win Mra
Director-General
International Organizations and Economic Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4. U Tin Nyo
Director-General, Department of Basic Education No.1, Ministry of Education
5. Professor Dr. Daw Khin Aye Win
General Secretary, Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation
6. Police Colonel Sit Aye
Joint Secretary, Working Committee on Trafficking in Persons, Ministry of Home Affairs
7. Dr. San Shwe Win
Director, Department of Health, Ministry of Health
8. Daw Khin Myo Myint
Director, Office of the Attorney-General
9. U Khin Maung Lay
Deputy Director, Department of Labour, Ministry of Labour
10. Daw Aye Aye Mu
Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Myanmar, Geneva
11. U Tha Aung Nyun
Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Myanmar, Geneva
12. U Myint Thu
First Secretary
Permanent Mission of Myanmar, Geneva
13. U Ba Hla Aye
First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Myanmar, Geneva

14. U Kyaw Thu Nyein
Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Myanmar, Geneva

Mr. Chairperson,

Since our Second National Report, which contains relevant details, is before the Committee and as we have also provided the required additional and updated information in writing to the Committee, I shall refrain from going into the details in my statement. I shall, however, try to give a brief overview of what we are endeavouring in Myanmar to promote the rights of children in accordance with the provisions contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with whatever little resources that we have at our disposal.

In Myanmar, the government is giving top priority to the rights of children in our national agenda. To present in a nutshell what we have achieved, Myanmar became a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on 15 August 1991. Two years after, the government promulgated the Child Law. In September 1993 the National Committee on the Rights of the Child was formed to effectively and successfully implement the provisions of the Convention and the Child Law. Soon after the establishment of the National Committee, Working Committees were formed at the State/Division, District and Township levels throughout the country. This was followed up by the formation of Monitoring and Evaluation Sub-Committee in May 1999.

With a view to raising public awareness and participation, the National Committee on the Rights of the Child has published 15000 copies of the Child Law in English and Myanmar languages and have distributed them free of charge. The Child Law has been translated into Kayin, Shan, Mon, Kachin and Chin languages and the translated texts have been widely distributed. Brochures, posters, hand-outs and table-calendars with messages of the CRC have also been published and distributed.

The mobile teams formed with technicians trained by the Department of Social Welfare in co-operation with UNICEF are performing CRC awareness raising programmes in the remote border areas. Educational programmes have been carried out in (6) States and Divisions, (8) districts and (40) townships during 2001-2003 and a total number of 2384 CRC Committee members and people in the community have participated in those programmes. Besides, (73) training courses on the Rights of the Child, child development and child protection courses have been conducted by the National Committee on the Rights of the Child. During 2001-2003 and (2620) trainees have been trained.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Law have been included in the curriculum of the training courses of the Department of Social Welfare, Institute of Central Civil Service and Myanmar Red Cross Society. Workshops have also been conducted to enhance public awareness. Moreover, we have actively taken part in the workshops and seminars conducted abroad. I would like to inform the distinguished members of the Committee that starting from the 2004-2005 Academic Year, the Ministry of Education will include human rights education, including child rights, in the school curriculum commencing from the secondary level.

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me briefly apprise the esteemed Committee of the development in the education sector.

A long term Thirty-Year Plan for basic education development (2001-2031) has been launched with the vision of creating an education system that can generate a learning society capable of facing the challenges of the knowledge age. This long-term plan includes programmes that concern the development of children.

The Government is making every effort to ensure that children enjoy the right to basic education. Since 1991, the Continuous Assessment and Progression System (CAPS) project has been implemented in collaboration with UNICEF. This project has raised the quality of primary education and reduced the repetition rate significantly. In May 1999, the

Ministry of Education launched a "School Enrolment Week" to ensure education opportunities and access to education of all school-going age children. This programme was continued in the specific focused townships in 2001-2002. By the academic year 2005-2006, it will have covered all the townships in Myanmar. As a result, an increase in the primary intake rate is seen rising from 91% in 1999 to 95.05% in 2003-2004 academic year.

To cope with the increasing student transition rate into the secondary junior and senior levels due to the rising attendance in the primary levels, post primary schools have been opened in affiliation with basic education middle schools enabling the young students to continue their study in the middle school levels in their own locality after completion of primary level. Thus, the transition rate from primary to middle level (junior secondary) rose from 67.8% in 2000-2001 to 79.4% in 2003-2004 academic year. Moreover, a special arrangement has been made introducing two or three years primary schooling for over-aged school children in lieu of the usual five years at the primary level.

To open opportunities and easy access to learning with good quality education, the Ministry of Education has joint projects with UNESCO/UNICEF and JICA facilitating the initiation of Child Friendly School in the Area Focused Townships (AFT), imparting School Based Healthy Living and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education (SHAPE) and practising Child Centered Approach (CCA) in schools. In addition, Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) has also been arranged for those children who could not go to formal schooling.

Mr. Chairperson,

Myanmar is making efforts to realize as much as possible children's health objectives prescribed in the Declaration entitled "A World Fit for Children" adopted by the UN General Assembly at the Twenty Seventh Special Session in May 2002. The Government has laid down the National Programme of Action and the National Health Plan and has implemented them for the survival, protection and development of children in Myanmar. The children throughout Myanmar, irrespective of race, religion, status, culture, birth or sex have the right to receive health services equally. In implementing health programmes, the government sees to it that priority is given to basic health care requirements in the remote border areas where the national races live.

In the area of maternal and child health care, holistic life cycle approach has reduced maternal, infant and under five mortality, unwanted pregnancy and abortion rates. The malaria morbidity and mortality rate has also decreased as a result of prompt treatment, prevention and education.

Since 1996 the Government has successfully carried out immunization activities throughout the country. The goal to maintain full immunization coverage for all infants, pregnant women against tetanus has been achieved since 1990. Over 90 % of all children under five years of age have been immunized with polio vaccine. The Government, working together with UNICEF and WHO was able to declare the Eradication of Polio in Myanmar on 13 February 2003.

A week prior, at the meeting of the Global Alliance for Leprosy Elimination held in Yangon, we proudly declared leprosy as eliminated in Myanmar. In this successful endeavour, the Myanmar Government worked closely with WHO and other international agencies. Another important area of achievement was in the domain of Universal Iodization of Salt where we have achieved significant results. Our goal is to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders by 2005 in cooperation with UN agencies especially UNICEF.

Mr. Chairperson,

The National Committee for the Rights of the Child has been working closely with the Committee for Trafficking in Persons and the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs to prevent trafficking in women and children and to prevent children from sexual exploitation and abuse. Just recently, the Government conducted a Workshop on monitoring and combating Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and Trafficking with the co-sponsorship of Japanese Government, UN Agencies UNICEF, UNIAP and local NGOs. In Myanmar, persons under 18 who have been involved in

sexual exploitation, including prostitution, sales and trafficking are provided with counselling and rehabilitation services. Severe action is taken against trafficking of children and an imprisonment for a term which may extend to ten years is meted out to traffickers.

The Government has recently decided to become a party to the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol on Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children. At present, a special Law on Trafficking in Persons is being drafted by the authorities concerned with a view to promulgating it in 2004. Moreover, the Body Organ Donation Law promulgated on 19 February 2004 strictly prohibits organ donation by children below the age of 18. A draft law on tobacco control, under scrutiny by the Office of the Attorney-General will prohibit sale of tobacco to and by minors. It will also prohibit all forms of tobacco advertisement and designated public places will become tobacco free areas.

The Government of Myanmar is deeply committed to the protection of children including the important issue of child soldiers. Under the Myanmar Defence Services Act of 1974 and War Office Council Instruction 13/73 a person cannot be enlisted into the armed forces unless he has attained the age of 18. Recently, a Committee for the Prevention of the Recruitment of Child Soldiers was established. The high level committee is chaired by the Secretary (2) of the State Peace and Development Council and its members include the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Home Affairs, the Minister for Labour, the Minister for Social Welfare, the Judge Advocate-General, and two high ranking officials from the Ministry of Defence. The Committee at its first meeting on 16 January discussed ways and means to render strict observance of rules, regulations and directives concerning the prevention against recruitment of children for military service. The Committee also decided to set up a Task Force for the matter.

Mr. Chairperson,

Children enjoy a special place in Myanmar. They are regarded as "Jewels" of the society. Because of the extended family pattern which is predominant in Myanmar families, children are nurtured not only by their parents, grandparents and relatives but also by their respective communities. Promulgation of the Child Law in 1993 two years after our accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and subsequent adoption of Rules of the Child Law are significant achievements in promoting and protecting the rights of the children in Myanmar. We are today trying our utmost to create better opportunities for the children so that they can live in a better world enjoying full range of their rights.

Mr. Chairperson,

Before concluding, my delegation would like to reaffirm that Myanmar is committed to work for the full realization of the rights of the children in my country. My delegation remains ready to engage in a constructive dialogue with the distinguished members of the Committee and work together with them so that we can find ways and means to better the lives of the children in my country.

Thank you.