THE UN Considers its Options on Burma
By LALIT K JHA / UNITED NATIONS Tuesday, March 18, 2008

The UN special envoy for Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, met the UN General Assembly president, Srgjan Kerim, on Monday and briefed him on his recent trip to Burma and the progress of his efforts to nudge the country towards a restoration of democracy and protection of human rights.

Gambari is also scheduled to brief the powerful 15-member UN Security Council on Tuesday. He is expected to give a frank assessment of the current situation in Burma and to outline what the international community can do, in his view, to ensure that the junta addresses the demands of the international community, including calls for the release of pro-democracy leader Suu Kyi and other political prisoners.

Gambari ended his third visit to Burma in a little over six months on March 10. During his visit, the UN envoy met Aung San Suu Kyi and several senior military officials. However, he made little visible progress towards achieving the goals set by the UN Security Council through its presidential statement in October.

Now that the approach of “dialogue and accommodation” has demonstrably failed, the United Nations appears to be set to review its Burma policy.

A UN diplomat privy to a meeting between Gambari and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in Dakar, Senegal last week told The Irrawaddy that the UN is now reevaluating its approach to Burma. “That is what the purpose (of the meeting) was,” the diplomat said.

During his meeting with the UN secretary-general, Gambari is believed to have conceded that he has been unable to get things moving in Burma.

The junta’s public snubbing of the UN envoy, which was widely reported by the official media, made it clear to Gambari that his approach of accommodating the generals in an effort to engage them in a dialogue on ways to move forward has not worked.

Despite several rounds of discussions with junta leaders and military officials in Burma and countless trips to capitals around the world over the past six months, Gambari has been unable to accomplish any of the goals set by himself, by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, or by the Security Council.

Nonetheless, following his meeting with Gambari, the UN General Assembly President Srgjan Kerim expressed confidence in the work of the special envoy. He also issued a statement calling for “serious engagement and strong commitment” from all parties to further national reconciliation.

Kerim said he was encouraged by the fact that the UN envoy was able to meet with key figures, including Suu Kyi, as well as with representatives of the Referendum Convening Commission and the Constitution Drafting Committee.

The General Assembly president also said that he hoped the Burmese regime would be open to giving the UN a monitoring role in an upcoming referendum on the new draft constitution, even though the military junta has already rejected the proposal.

Now that Gambari’s efforts have failed to yield any favorable results, UN diplomats are brainstorming what the world body’s next policy towards Burma should be.

But neither the UN nor member states that have taken a strong pro-democracy stance have a “plan B” on which they can move immediately. Given the interest of key neighboring countries and the pro-junta position of Russia and China inside the Security Council, it is unlikely that a consensus on a new UN policy towards Burma will emerge anytime soon.

Following his briefing with the Security Council, Gambari is also expected to participate in a meeting of the secretary-general’s Friends of Burma group later this week. These meetings, officials said, would set the ground for preparing a new policy on Burma.
Those closely watching these developments said that time is running out, as the referendum on the junta-drafted constitution is scheduled to take place in May, and the world body has still taken no effective measures to ensure that pro-democracy forces and ethnic groups are given a voice. They also point out that the junta must release Suu Kyi and enter into a time-bound dialogue with her.

But whether the UN can pressure the generals to make any concessions, with Russia and China possibly blocking any efforts to impose sterner measures against the regime, is the million-dollar question. Russia, which holds the presidency of Security Council for the month of March, is unlikely to allow the 15-member body to take any strong stance against the junta, as advocated by pro-democracy supporters.

Reflecting the views of millions of Burmese, however, three Security Council members—the United States, Britain and France—are now expected to push for a binding resolution against Burma. This means that the generals may soon be forced to listen to the language of confrontation—a language they understand much better than the more conciliatory noises now coming out of the United Nations.

The Irrawaddy Newsletter, news@irrawaddy.org, April 2, 2008 - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=11253

Wednesday, April 2, 2008

Burma’s NLD Calls for a Referendum “No” Vote

By WAI MOE

Burma’s main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), called on the electorate for the first time on Wednesday to cast a “No” vote in the constitutional referendum in May.

The party, headed by pro-democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi, said a “No” vote was necessary because the proposed constitution had not been written by elected representatives of the people but by “hand-picked puppets” of the regime.

The draft constitution, drawn up by the regime-constituted National Convention, and a general election to be held in May are the fourth and fifth steps of the junta’s seven-step “road map to a disciplined democracy”.

The NLD’s announcement on Wednesday said the proposed constitution broke a basic principle of democracy, under which authority had to come from the people. It also failed to guarantee democratic values and human rights.

By voting against the draft constitution, the people would be practicing their rights, said NLD spokesman Thein Nyunt. The state powers being exercised by the regime had not originated with the people, he told The Irrawaddy — “Therefore it is the responsibility of all citizens to take back people-power.”

The NLD had been criticized for failing to take an early stand on the referendum. Aung Naing Oo, a Burmese political commentator based in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand, welcomed the NLD’s call now for a “No” vote and said it increased the party’s credibility.

Another Burmese political analyst, Htay Aung, said that dissidents inside Burma had called for a “No” vote, and predicted a “confrontation” ahead of the referendum.

Several activists had been attacked in Rangoon because of their views, he said— “These violent acts by the security forces and thugs backed by the junta don’t seem to stop,” he said.

Fourteen members of the Committee Representing the Peoples’ Parliament (CRPP), which was formed by successful candidates in the 1990 election, have also called for rejection of the proposed constitution by the Burmese people as well as internationally.

The document had been written without the participation of the NLD or ethnic party representatives and without meeting the expectations of ethnic nationalities, the CRPP members said.

They described the draft constitution as “a sham,” and said they expected the junta to claim a referendum victory “by cheating and fraud.”

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QUOTE OF THE DAY
We appeal to the people to go to the polling booth and vote against the constitution.
- Nyan Win, National League for Democracy spokesman

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA
Activists Stage Protest against Constitution

By MIN LWIN    Thursday, March 27, 2008  - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=11141

A group of activists staged a rare protest in front of the Rangoon headquarters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) on Thursday, calling on Burmese citizens to vote against a proposed constitution which will give sweeping powers to the country’s armed forces.

A member of the NLD said that more than 30 protesters wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the word “No” gathered at the party’s headquarters as hundreds of others came to attend a ceremony marking Burma’s Armed Forces Day. According to the NLD member, some the protesters wore prison uniforms and shackles, while others held the flags of the United Nations and the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League, Burma’s main political party prior to the military takeover in 1962.

“They shouted slogans against the junta’s constitution and called on people to vote ‘no’ at the polling stations,” the NLD member told The Irrawaddy on Thursday, adding that some members of the party joined in the protest.

The rare show of defiance lasted just 30 minutes and attracted the attention of security forces stationed around the NLD’s headquarters, who photographed the protesters. According to witnesses, the demonstrators also distributed pamphlets calling on voters to go to the polls and vote against the constitution. Under a new law enacted in February, it is illegal to publicly criticize the referendum or the constitution. Violations are punishable by fines and three-year prison sentences.

Meanwhile, sources said that a signboard with the words, “Never Deceive the Nation,” appeared today in front of the home of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

“The signboard has the words and a portrait of [Burmese independence hero and father of Aung San Suu Kyi] Aung San, painted by Suu Kyi,” said a member of the NLD.

http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=11141

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Veteran Journalist Calls for People Power to Oust Regime

By VIOLET CHO    Wednesday, March 12, 2008

Less than a week after an unsuccessful visit to Burma by UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari, one of the country’s most respected journalists has made an extraordinary appeal for a “people power” uprising to end the ruling regime’s stranglehold on power.

In a recorded message addressed to Burmese both inside and outside the country, Ludu Sein Win, a prominent journalist and former political prisoner, said that he believed that force was the only way to end more than four decades of military rule.

“In the entire history of the world, there has never been a dictator who willingly gave up power once he had it firmly in his hands,” he said in his message, recorded in the former capital, Rangoon.

“And there are no countries in the world which have gained liberation through the help of the United Nations,” he added, in apparent reference to the failed efforts of the UN special envoy, who left the country on Monday after being chastised by the ruling generals for “bias” in favor of the democratic opposition.
Describing the deepening political, social and economic crisis facing the country, the sixty-eight-year-old veteran journalist warned the Burmese people that it was futile to pin their hopes for a better future on the diplomatic efforts of the international community.

“Don’t waste your time dreaming about dialogue and considering help from the UN Security Council,” he said. “We already have the power to force out the military dictatorship. That power is the force and strength of every Burmese citizen.”

In the wake of last September’s monk-led protests, which attracted worldwide attention, the time is right to launch a renewed effort to overthrow military rule, the veteran journalist insisted.

Ludu Sein Win has experienced more than his fair share of trouble at the hands of the country’s ruling dictators.

He began his distinguished career as a young reporter for the Mandalay-based left-wing newspaper, Ludu (“The People”), launched in 1946. As the publication’s Rangoon bureau chief, he was arrested at the age of 27 and sentenced without trial to 13 years in prison, during which he was tortured by the authorities. He then spent an additional two years confined on Coco Island, a penal colony located about 430 km southwest of Rangoon in the Indian Ocean.

He is one of Burma’s most outspoken advocates of independent media, and is the author of many books on the basic theory and ethics of journalism. He is also popular as a prolific writer of books on issues relating to young people.

The Irrawaddy Newsletter, news@irrawaddy.org - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=11063

Burmese Balk at Immutable Constitution - By WAI MOE

Friday, March 21, 2008 - The BurmaNet News, 21.03.2008-Issue # 3427-"Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>

As Burma prepares for a referendum on the ruling junta’s draft constitution, many Burmese are expressing growing uneasiness over the prospect of a dead-end charter that appears to be carved in stone. Although the regime has yet to disclose the full contents of the constitution, many have already decided to reject it on the grounds that it will be virtually impossible to change once it comes into force.

Under Section 12 of the draft charter, any amendment would require the support of more than three-quarters of members of parliament. However, with 25 percent of seats going to military appointees, the chance of changes being introduced against the wishes of Burma’s powerful generals is effectively nil.

Two weeks ago, when United Nations Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari was in the country to press for a more inclusive political process, he was told by the head of the junta’s Spokes Authoritative Team, Information Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan, that the constitution would not remain unchanged forever.

“The democratic rights of the countries where democracy has flourished are different from the democratic rights when they started to practice democracy,” the Information Minister said in a lecture to the visiting envoy on March 7. “It took time for these countries to make their democratic rights mature to the present level. We also will change and develop gradually.”

When the junta announced in early February that it would hold a referendum on the constitution in May, some cautiously welcomed the move as opening a door to future democratic changes. Now, however, many say that there is little room left for such optimism.

“When I looked at some of the basic principles of the constitution, I can see that this thinking is totally wrong,” said a businessman in Rangoon, speaking on condition of anonymity.

“I cannot change the constitution, how can we accept it?”

Despite growing doubts about the constitution, however, he also ruled out any likelihood that the outcome of the referendum would reflect the will of the people.

“Under military rule, we cannot openly say what we really want because we are afraid. So a genuine referendum and election is impossible in this country.”

Win Min, a Burmese political analyst based in Chiang Mai, Thailand also said that it would be meaningless to endorse the constitution without guarantees that it can be altered to meet the needs of the country.
“If we cannot modify the constitution, democratization in Burma cannot grow,” he said, noting that the regime had been careful to block any prospect of unwanted changes.

He also rejected as naïve the argument—made by some exiled dissidents and opposition politicians inside Burma—that the new constitution might pave the way to improvements in the country’s political situation.

While some say that the opposition should be flexible in its approach to the referendum, other observers note that the real problem lies in the inflexibility of the constitution itself.

Speaking to The Irrawaddy on Friday, a Burmese journalist working for an international news agency in Rangoon described the junta's constitution as “too rigid” to withstand Burma's political challenges.

“Making a constitution is like building a house—the foundation is the most important part. Over time, the structure on top of this foundation will need to be changed, but this won’t be possible if the foundation is not strong,” he said.

He added that constitutional amendments should be possible with 50 percent approval in parliament. Without this, he said “there is no room to maneuver.”

“If we cannot change the constitution, Burma is on a river of no return.”

Reuters - 09 March 2008 - Burma News - Euro-Burma Office "EBO" <burma@euro-burma.be>

Myanmar junta rejects U.N. offer of poll monitors

YANGON - Myanmar's military government has rejected a United Nations offer of observers for May's constitutional referendum and elections in 2010, redoubling concerns about the freedom and fairness of both polls.

"Holding the referendum for the constitution is within the Statesovereignty," Sunday's official newspapers quoted referendum commissioner Thaung Nyunt as telling visiting U.N. special envoy Ibrahim Gambari.

"Arrangements have been made for the eligible voters to cast their votes freely," he added, squashing any hopes the international community might have had that independent observers would be allowed in to monitor the plebiscite.

He also spurned Gambari's offer of U.N. technical assistance, saying the former Burma's military had "enough experience" with running elections.

The last time it did so, in 1990, it ignored the result when opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party won more than 80 percent of the vote.

"It shows the regime has lost its appetite for cooperating with the U.N.,” an Asian diplomat, who did not want to be named, said.

Gambari met Myanmar's health and planning ministers in Yangon on Sunday, as well as a deputy foreign minister.

AP - Mar 27, 2008 - NLDmembersSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK@yahoo.comTin Kyi <mtinkyi7@yahoo.com> - Burma Related News - Myanmar junta celebrates military might - Mar 27, 2008 - 6:33 AM ET

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) - Myanmar's junta chief insisted Thursday that he is not power-hungry and intends to hand control of the government to the winners of elections in 2010.

Senior Gen. Than Shwe made the comments in a nationally televised speech marking Armed Forces Day, an annual holiday that celebrates the military's might.

Foreign media were denied visas to cover this year's event, which falls on the six-month anniversary of the junta's deadly crackdown on Buddhist monks and pro-democracy protesters.

The September crackdown sparked a global outcry and revived demands for the junta, which has been in power since 1988, to make democratic reforms.

During his 15-minute speech, Than Shwe made several references to the junta's announcement last month that it will hold a referendum on a new constitution later this year, followed by long-awaited general elections in 2010. The junta calls the process its "roadmap to democracy."
"The draft constitution has been completed and the constitutional referendum will be held in May," Than Shwe said, speaking in a weak voice under a glaring tropical sun. "Handing over of state power can be done after multiparty elections ... in 2010."

Than Shwe, 75, did not address rumors of his declining health, although he appeared steady as he stood inside a moving convertible to review 13,000 troops assembled at a massive parade ground in Naypyitaw, the remote administrative capital the junta moved government offices to in 2005.

He said the junta has "a sincere aim for developing the country without any cravings for power," and he called on his troops to ensure a smooth transition when it comes time for a transfer of power.

The gathering included the military's top brass, diplomats and local journalists.

Critics have denounced the junta's draft constitution as designed to cement military rule. The drafting process did not include detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is often accused by the junta of trying to destabilize the country, an accusation also directed at Western nations.

Suu Kyi has been under house arrest for 12 of the past 18 years.

Her pro-democracy party, the National League for Democracy, held a ceremony Thursday at its headquarters in Yangon, the country's biggest city.

Party leaders called for unity ahead of the referendum and reiterated Suu Kyi's message "to hope for the best and be prepared for the worst."

The military seized power in 1962, ending an experiment in democracy and leading the resource-rich nation toward isolation and economic ruin.

The current junta took power in 1988 after brutally crushing a pro-democracy uprising. Two years later it refused to hand over power when Suu Kyi's party won a landslide election victory.

Armed Forces Day is held every March 27 to commemorate the day in 1945 when the Myanmar army rose up against Japanese occupation forces.

THE IRRAWADDY - www.irrawaddy.org

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS - Saturday, March 8, 2008

The UN special envoy to promote political reconciliation in Burma met Aung San Suu Kyi and other opposition party members Saturday, a day after being rebuffed by the country's military rulers.

Suu Kyi, who has been detained without trial for 12 of the past 18 years, was seen being driven from the residence where she is held under house arrest to the state guest house where Ibrahim Gambari was staying. Gambari, representing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, was scheduled to hold talks with Suu Kyi, but details of their meeting were likely to be closely held.

The UN envoy earlier held talks with representatives of ethnic groups, non-governmental organizations and several political parties including executives of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party.

At their one-hour morning meeting with Gambari, five NLD leaders told him of their desire for an accelerated dialogue with the junta and the release of political prisoners, according to one of the party members present.

The United Nations holds a similar position, but the junta shows no sign of implementing either action. Burma has been in a political deadlock since the junta, which seized power in 1998, refused to honor the results of a 1990 general election won by Suu Kyi's party.

Gambari told the NLD executives that he would try his utmost to press their case, but also suggested that they should
grab any opportunities offered by the junta, said the party official, who asked not to be identified because he is not authorized to speak to the press.

The junta's top spokesman told Gambari at a Friday meeting that that the government had done enough to hold a dialogue with Suu Kyi, by appointing a ministerial level liaison officer for her and announcing that junta chairman Snr-Gen Than Shwe would be willing to meet her if she gave up her "confrontational attitude" and stopped calling for sanctions against the junta.

Information Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan told Gambari that Burma has no political prisoners and that Suu Kyi was detained because she tried to disrupt stability of the country, state-controlled media reported.

Kyaw Hsan also expressed unhappiness with Gambari's trips to other countries in the region to seek their support for political reform in Burma.

Gambari arrived Thursday on his third trip to Burma since the junta's deadly crackdown on nonviolent pro-democracy protesters in September sparked a global outcry. The visit came amid growing concerns that the government is ignoring calls for political reform and is tightening its grip on power.

The junta said last month that it would hold a constitutional referendum in May and general elections in 2010 "the first specific dates for steps in a previously announced "roadmap to democracy."

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THE IRRAWADDY - www.irrawaddy.org


By ROBERT EVANS / REUTERS WRITER / GENEVA  Saturday, March 15, 2008

Burma denied a visa to investigator for human rights Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, whose report to the UN Human Rights Council on Thursday cited growing repression following the crushing of monk-led protests in the country last September, the United Nations said.

The UN rights envoy said on Friday he could believe in "gnomes, trolls and elves" as readily as he could credit the Burmese military's democratic reforms.

"If you believe in gnomes, trolls and elves, you can believe in this democratic process in Myanmar [Burma]," Pinheiro told a Friday news briefing at the UN's European headquarters in Geneva.

Pinheiro told that briefing he had been granted a visa to enter Burma after two months' delay, calling the development auspicious. But the Brazilian jurist had apparently erred.

"He had received the information that his passport was ready to be picked up," a subsequent UN statement said. "Later in the afternoon, he learned no visa had been issued."

Pinheiro's report said that while the government had announced it would hold a referendum in May on a constitution setting the nation on a path to democracy with elections in 2010, this was difficult to reconcile with wide restrictions on free speech.

The secretive regime in Burma has barred outdoor meetings of more than five people, has continued targeting opponents, and is holding some 1,850 political prisoners.

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA
Burma's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Wunna Maung Lwin, told the 47-member Human Rights Council on Thursday that Pinheiro's report "completely lacks...objectivity and impartiality."

In December, the Council told Burma it should prosecute those responsible for the September crackdown, end the house arrest of Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and free all political detainees.

Pinheiro said on Friday that the military junta - which insists all human rights are observed in the country and that all those jailed have violated laws - had ignored resolutions by the Council and the UN General Assembly.

"The trouble with this country is that it makes no concessions," he said.

"No referendum or elections can be fair, no transition to democracy can be effective, without the release of political prisoners, the authorization for all political parties to operate, and the protection of the basic civil and political freedoms, all non-existent in Myanmar."

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Geneva, 22-03-2008 Justice for Burma by Claude Schauli

During three days, from March 14th, 15th till 16th, a manifestation of solidarity with Burmese democrats took place in Geneva.

While the Council for Human Rights took place, the 6th film festival in honour of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was being held.

Day and evening of Friday, the 14th March, were dedicated to Burma especially by demonstrating three films, i.e. “Capturing the struggle”, a picture made by journalists of Democratic Voice of Burma, “Burma, a revolution in pictures” by Claude Schauli, and “The shadows of Burma” by Bernard Genier.

Two rounds of talk permitted the invited guests (between them Dr. Sein Win, prime minister of NCGUB, Dr. Thaung Thun, representative of NCGUB at the UNO, Harn Yawghwe, representative of the Burmese democrats at the EU, director of the Democratic Voice of Burma, Stanley Van Tha, dissident of the Chin, and Sergio Paolo Pinheiro, independent expert at the UNO), to be informed on the situation in Burma and especially on the referendum planned for Mai.

More than 400 visitors participated at the evening meeting, which showed that after the tragic events of September 2007 the civil society showed sympathy for the Burmese democrats.

A press conference, organized by the Club Suisse de la Presse, was held the same Friday late in the morning for about 40 people.

On Saturday and Sunday delegates of EBN held their halfyear forum at the Union Interparlementaire while an important Burmese delegation including about ten exiled monks living now in different European countries.

At an auction of art objects organised by the Association Suisse-Birmanie and Reporters without Borders, Suisse section, which also took place at the Union Interparlementaire, about 50 paintings and sculptures offered by Suisse artists were being sold. The proceeds permitted a contribution of more than US$ 30,000 (CHF 30'000.--) to Aye Chan Naing, director of the Underground Radio and Television DVB (Democratic Voice of Burma). To all those who participated at the different manifestations it was important that Burma, that was at the world's attention at the beginning of last autumn would not fall into oblivion. Whether artist, member of non government organisations, politician, journalist or merely interested in the country, all of them showed during three days their solidarity...
with the Burmese people. Every one of them wishes that Burma will soon find back to democracy, justice and piece.

You will find hereafter a video of 10 minutes from Euronews (interview with monks, Aye Chan, director of the DVB and Claude Schauli). http://www.euronews.net/index.php?page=cinema&article=475995&lng=2

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March 7, 2008 - South China Morning Post - Aung Kyaw Oo <akyawoo@verizon.net> - NLDmembrsnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK@yahoogroups.com

Be wary of Burmese junta’s election pledge – by Dr Thaung Htun
THE BURMANET NEWS - March 7, 2008 Issue # 3417-“Editor” <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

As the UN envoy to Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, again readies himself to discuss the country’s torturous, so far non-existent, path to freedom, it is worth considering those who will sit opposite him at the negotiating table. The junta that has been in place since 1962 has long since proved itself incapable of honour and bereft of sincerity. It has stalled and run diversions for decades and worn out more than one well-intentioned interlocutor.

For these reasons, Dr Gambari must be very wary of the junta’s announcement of a referendum on a new constitution in May and for general elections in 2010.

History does not lie. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (now the State Peace and Development Council) issued a declaration on September 18, 1988, stating that it was taking over state power to carry out four “duties”. It pledged to the monks and lay people that holding a multiparty general election would be its final duty.

Furthermore, the commander-in-chief of the Defence Services said on September 23, 1988: “... since our organisation, formed with members of the Defence Services, has also pledged loyalty to the nation, I believe that it will never renege on the promise it had given to the nation and the people …”

The council also passed the “People’s Assembly Elections Law” on May 31, 1989. Section 3 states: “The Parliament shall be formed with representatives elected from the constituencies in accordance with this law.”

The international community acknowledged that the election held in Burma in 1990 was fair and free. The National League for Democracy, with Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi as its leader, was elected with more than 80 per cent of the vote, but has never been allowed to take its place in the Burmese Parliament.

Speaking to local and foreign journalists in 1989, the commander-in-chief of the Burmese Defence Services clearly said that the military couldn’t draft the promised new constitution because it was not an elected entity.

The junta also extended its promise to allow the new constitution to be drafted by elected representatives.

Yet, even before a genuine dialogue between the government and political groups could take place, the junta announced the May referendum on a new constitution and the general election in 2010.

This openly flouts the fact that the authorities are duty bound to first explain to voters how they view the 1990 election result and why they refuse to accept its results.

A democratic nation can never be run in this way. The reason the National League for Democracy was formed in accordance with law is to restore human and democratic rights in Burma. Regardless of the situation, it will continue to cooperate with the UN.

Only through open dialogue and free and fair elections will Burma once again be a nation of freedom and peace, and a valued member of the international community.

Dr Thaung Htun is the representative for United Nations Affairs of the Burma UN Service Office, National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.

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AP - Draft UN statement targets Myanmar junta - By EDITH M. LEDERER, Associated Press Writer - Wed Apr 2, 11:38 PM ET

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - A draft Security Council statement calls on Myanmar's government to allow detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other political actors to speak freely and hold meetings ahead of the May referendum on a new constitution, according to a copy obtained Wednesday.

The statement prepared by the United States, Britain and France, was obtained by The Associated Press on the day that
Suu Kyi's party urged voters to reject the military-backed draft constitution. The National League for Democracy said it was undemocratic and prepared under the junta's direct control.

The statement is expected to be circulated to all 15 Security Council members in the coming days. It needs the approval of all members for the council to adopt it.

The draft statement "calls on the government of Myanmar to allow full participation of all political actors, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi" in the referendum process in order for it "to be inclusive and credible."

Myanmar has been ruled by the military since 1962. The current junta seized power in 1988 and refused to honor the results of a 1990 general election won by Suu Kyi's party. The Nobel Peace Prize winner, who is currently under house arrest, has been in detention without trial for more than 12 of the past 18 years.

Critics of the proposed constitution say it aims to perpetuate military rule.

The junta has been under strong international pressure to make democratic reforms, especially since it quashed peaceful pro-democracy protests last September. The U.N. estimates at least 31 people were killed and thousands more were detained in the crackdown.

The draft Security Council statement expresses regret at the military government's "slow rate of progress" towards meeting the council's call last September for a "genuine dialogue" with the pro-democracy opposition and the early release of all political prisoners and detainees.
An Appeal to the People In Connection With the National Referendum

1. The writing of the draft constitution that is to be decided by a national referendum did not involve elected representatives.

2. It was unilaterally written by individuals who are chosen by the State Peace and Development Council.

3. Moreover, the present draft constitution does not provide any guarantee for democracy and human rights which are ardently desired by the people and it also does not conform to the fundamental democratic principle which states that the sovereignty of a nation derives from the people.

4. Histories of our nation as well as the world's have proven that a body which governs a country will remain unstable if it does not have the support of the people.

5. Hence, people of all nationalities and organizations from all strata of life are urged to go to the polling booths unfailingly and boldly place a cross on their ballots to cast their decisive "NO" votes.

As per the decision made at the meetings of the Central Executive Committee on 20 March and 31 March 2008.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy
Rangoon

2 April 2008
The 12th Waning Moon of Tabaung, 1369 Burmese Era