

*WRITTEN JOINT STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
UNIVERSITY WOMEN, PAN PACIFIC SOUTH EAST ASIA WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION AND
WORLDWIDE ORGANISATION OF WOMEN*

**FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON THE HUMAN
RIGHTS SITUATION IN MYANMAR
1 OCTOBER 2007**

The International Federation of University Women, joined by the Pan Pacific South East Asia Women's Association and the Worldwide Organisation of Women take the opportunity of the 5th Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the Situation of Burma-Myanmar to make the following statement:

1. The ongoing repression of peaceful demonstrations and suppression of freedom of expression of individuals and the right of assembly, are of grave concern to our respective organisations, particularly as they affect women of all ages and their families. Curtailment of freedom of expression is seen not only in the steps taken by the military towards the marchers but also by the government's actions in shutting down connections to the outside world. .
2. We concur with those who demand release of detainees and ask for an investigation into the anti democratic nature of the whole current system. We want to emphasize that the peaceful demonstration was about the alleviation of the ongoing economic hardships, which undoubtedly greatly affect women and children .
3. We call attention, in particular, to the February 2007 report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Mr. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, where he indicated that there was consistent and continuing pattern of impunity and a high number of allegations of sexual violence against women and girls committed by members of the military that have been regularly documented since 2002. In 2006, the Special Rapporteur received information about 30 cases of rape of Chin women. In late November 2006, he received additional reports of abuses by the military, including sexual abuses, and their impact in Kayin State. He further stated that this trend of sexual violence is particularly alarming, bearing in mind that the figures provided are likely to be far lower than the reality as many women do not report incidents of sexual violence because of the trauma attached to it. The failure to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible for rape and sexual violence has contributed to an environment conducive to the perpetuation of violence against women and girls in Myanmar.
4. Forced labour, including child labour; trafficking in persons; continuing recruitment and use of child soldiers, use of landmines, and the large-scale confiscation of arable land, crops, livestock and other possessions, not only have strong implications to the right to food and decent standard of living of women and children as well as of men, but they also have dramatic impact on the economic and sustainable development and political stability of the country.
5. We are alarmed at the report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in 2005, which showed that Myanmar ranked 129th out of 159 countries'

Human Development Index. . Maternal mortality is among the highest in South-East Asia, and only 40 per cent of children complete five years of primary education. Rates of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis infection remain amongst the highest in Asia. Malaria is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality, and most commonly affects the poor and other groups at risk.

6. We wish to remind the Council that the Government of Myanmar has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and had submitted an initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1999, but its second periodic report has been overdue since August 2002. We agree with the Special Rapporteur that the Government of Myanmar would benefit from a dialogue with CEDAW to address the widespread sexual violence against women and girls that prevails in the country. .
7. Furthermore working with civil society and the UN system would be an opportunity for the Government of Myanmar to engage in a discussion of their periodic report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child due in August 2008, on the question of sexual violence against girls and on the recruitment of child soldiers, with a view to submitting its report in the best possible conditions.
8. Finally we urge the Human Rights Council to call on the Government of Myanmar for the immediate release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, General Secretary of the National League for Democracy and Peace Nobel Prize Lauriat, and her deputy Ti Oo, from their 18-yearlong house arrest, which is a serious denial of their fundamental rights and freedom of movement, and is not conducive to reconciliation. Releasing them could open the door to entering into a real dialogue with the Government. In this regard, we commend the initiatives being undertaken in the ASEAN region and we ask that they re-double their efforts.
9. We fully endorse the Special Rapporteur's recommendation to support all initiatives that would deal with common concerns of society such as saving the environment, economic growth and development, educational modernisation, medical research and engineering and the exploration and use of new technology which would lead to progress and to effective transition to democracy. We underscore that genuine political goodwill is essential to promoting the improvement of the standard of living and the protection of gender equal and intergenerational human rights of the people of Myanmar.