

STATEMENT ON ASEAN AND MYANMAR'S CRISIS

008/2021
October 31, 2021

1. The 38th and 39th ASEAN Leaders' Summit was concluded without controversy on October 28, 2021. It brought several tangible results but little progress on the unfolding deadly crisis in Myanmar.
2. First, we applauded the October 15 ASEAN Foreign Ministers' unprecedented decision to exclude Myanmar's murderous and mischievous military chief Min Aung Hlaing and his political representatives from 39th ASEAN Summit.
3. We appreciated the 38th and 39th ASEAN Chairman His Majesty Sultan Bolkiah's Statement on October 26, 2021, that expressed concern over the situation in Myanmar, including reports of fatalities and violence, also indicated calls for the release of political detainees including foreigners. Chairman's Statement reiterated Myanmar military to fulfil its commitment to the Five-Point Consensus of the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on 24 April 2021 and acceptance for the timely and complete implementation of the Five-Point Consensus.
4. We welcome the Southeast Asian parliamentarians' call on the ASEAN to take concrete actions to resolve the disastrous situation in Myanmar by immediately engaging with the National Unity Government (NUG).
5. Obviously, ASEAN has never been tested in a challenging political arena like Myanmar's crisis as it was not designed to be a geo-political entity at the establishment, but it will become irrelevant if it cannot transform to adapt complex political challenges and to reinvigorate its centrality in the region. The ASEAN tried to duck behind the charter statement of non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States at the beginning of coup in Myanmar. The bloc's failure to stand up against Myanmar junta's violation of the key principle of adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and constitutional government has given the free world a dark image on ASEAN.
6. The initial misstep of offering legitimacy to coup leader Min Aung Hlaing by allowing him to attend April 24 ASEAN special Leadership meeting and referring to him as "Myanmar's Leader" as well as the subsequent missteps by dragging on a false hope for the cooperation of the mischievous junta to comply with the five-point consensus had resulted in failure to de-escalate the deadly conflicts. ASEAN's inaction culminated with continued brutal repression of months-long nationwide peaceful uprising which was transformed into new armed prodemocracy and ethnic minority forces.

7. While respecting the principle of non-interference, there is the need to strike an appropriate balance to the application of ASEAN principles on the situation in Myanmar as stated by 38th and 39th Chair of ASEAN. We are cautiously reassured by the ASEAN Chair for 2022, Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Sen's vow to enhance bloc's centrality, unity, and development and to be resilient against pressure from geo-political competition and to push Myanmar's military rulers to open dialogue with its opponents.
8. We are encouraged by the ASEAN's commitment on Myanmar remaining a member of the ASEAN family. We simply believe the ASEAN's credibility depends not only on its ability to act decisively to bring the Myanmar military junta to end its relentless campaign of violence against the people of Myanmar but also its decisive action to restore democracy and legitimate civilian rule.
9. We call for the ASEAN to:
 - a) curtail the junta's presence at all ASEAN events until there is an end to violence, and all political prisoners are free,
 - b) officially engage with National Unity Government (NUG), the legitimate representative of the people of Myanmar, and
 - c) provide desperately needed cross border humanitarian assistance immediately.
10. The theme of ASEAN A.C.T.: Addressing Challenges Together for harmony, peace and prosperity in the whole region can be implemented only with the stability in Myanmar. We strongly support the initial constructive moves and indications in recent weeks, and they must be followed with further decisive actions to stand up with the people of Myanmar, and to support unwavering will of building a democratic federal union that provides and protects democracy, freedom, peace, and prosperity for all in Myanmar and the region.

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About Free Myanmar

Free Myanmar is the movement of concerned people from all walks of life and across the continents that, for reasons both personal and compassionate, have come together to unify voices and non-violent activities outside Myanmar in coordination with movements inside Myanmar to end military dictatorship and support Myanmar's transition to a truly democratic federal union that protects and provides equal opportunities for all regardless of race, religion, gender, and background.