

## **Statement of the 9th Karen National Unity Seminar 31st May 2013**

The 9th Karen National Unity Seminar was successfully held from May 27 to 31, 2013 at a certain location in Karen resistance area. More than 150 representatives and observers from 40 Karen organizations, domestic as well as overseas, participated in the five-day seminar.

The seminar participants deliberately discuss ways to strengthen unity among the Karen people and confer on their plight in the context of current political situation in Burma.

With the leadership of Karen National Union, the seminar participants reaffirm their commitment to building national unity on the basis of ethnic equality, rights to self-determination and selfadministration, democracy and genuine federal union.

In review of current political development in the country, the seminar participants:

- Discuss thoroughly issues of national concern including but not limited to Karen national political goals and the ongoing peace negotiation process, economic development and investment projects in the Karen-populated areas, humanitarian assistance, refugee repatriation, and the role of civil society organizations;
- Support overwhelmingly the Four-Step Peace Plan of KNU –
  - 1) preliminary ceasefire stage,
  - 2) Durable ceasefire stage,
  - 3) Initial political dialogue, resolution of underlying political problems, and national reconciliation,
  - 4) Political participation – and encourage both the government and the KNU to establish a timebound peace process towards the implementation of genuine political negotiations, and to include economic and land issues for discussion in the negotiation process;
- Call for transparency and accountability in matters related to economic, development and investment activities as it is imperative that local communities benefit from those projects; thus oppose, as we are still in the process of achieving durable ceasefire, mining and mega-development projects that are potentially destructive to the environment and peace process; and, to widely distribute and educate the public about the economic policies of KNU;
- Are deeply concerned that cross-border humanitarian assistance provided to needy communities in the Karen area have been reduced significantly, and therefore strongly encourage the international community to continue the cross-border humanitarian assistance until real peace is achieved;
- Call on the Burmese government, the KNU and Karen community-based organizations to collaboratively work on eliminating widespread drug and gambling problems in Karen state.

- Welcome the Karen Refugees Committee's position statement regarding refugee repatriation plan, and insist on a dignified, voluntary return of refugees in accordance with the policies of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
- Resolve, with the aim of building a better future for the Karen people, to convene an all-inclusive Karen National Convention on the basis of national unity; and,
- Declare to strive resolutely towards achieving our ultimate political goals by attaining solid Karen national unity through plans to be laid down by the said Karen National Convention for reunification of different Karen armed organizations, coordination between Karen political parties, and collaboration among Karen civil society organizations.

Karen National Unity Seminar Organizing Committee

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