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STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER, OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

AND

CHAIRMAN OF THE DELEGATION

OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR

AT THE FIFTY-NINTH SESSION

OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,

Allow me first of all to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Fifty-ninth Session of the General Assembly. I am fully confident that your wisdom and diplomatic skills will guide our deliberations to a fruitful outcome. I would also like to take the occasion to convey my

Myanmar is also an active player in sub-regional cooperation initiatives such as ACMECS (Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy) and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical Cooperation). These are noteworthy frameworks for closer economic and social cooperation among neighbouring countries. Myanmar also actively participates

institute effective regulatory controls. Without precursor chemicals there can be no amphetamine-type synthetic drugs.

Myanmar is determined in its fight against drugs. It has established bilateral, trilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation to rid the world of this scourge.

Mr. President,

Some western countries allege that Myanmar is not adequately addressing the issue of trafficking in persons. Nothing can be further from the truth. In fact, Myanmar views trafficking in persons as an evil that must be suppressed through concerted action. We have been seriously tackling the problem through a comprehensive framework comprising national legislation, a plan of action, high level commitment as well as through bilateral, regional and international cooperation, including the Bali Process.

In this connection, Myanmar acceded to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on 30 March of this year. A national law on anti- human trafficking is being drafted in accord with that Convention.

Myanmar will host the meeting of the six-nation Coordinated Mekong

Myanmar has consistently cooperated with the United Nations on human rights issues. It is promoting and protecting the fundamental rights of its citizens, including the right to food, clothing and shelter and the right to development. In this context, a national Human Rights Committee has already been established and human rights awareness is being introduced in school curricula nationwide as well as through workshops.

Mr. President,

An interview by a politically motivated NGO with 25 or so insurgents inside a neighbouring country became the basis of a report that there are 70,000 child soldiers in the Myanmar national armed forces. This is a farfetched conclusion. The falsehood found its way into the Secretary-General's report on Children and Armed Conflict in 2002. The report subsequently became the resource document in the thematic debate on children and armed conflict that ensued in the Security Council.

I wish to firmly reiterate that, first Myanmar is not a nation in armed conflict. It is a nation at peace. Second, I wish to clearly state that children are not permitted to be recruited into the Armed Services in Myanmar by law or in practice.

A preventive programme has been in place in the country even before the Security Council thematic resolution was adopted. In this regard, the Chairman of the Committee on the Prevention of the Recruitment of Child Soldiers recently received the UNICEF representative in Myanmar to explore ways and means to enhance cooperation. The representative was afforded the opportunity to visit the army recruitment centre near Yangon, and subsequently the army recruitment centre in Mandalay together with the UN Resident Coordinator. They made field trips and held discussions with military personnel concerned. They also met the recruits. Myanmar is finalizing an Action Plan and is cooperating with UNICEF in that regard. It will also continue its cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.

Mr. President,

Allow me to turn to developments in my country. Peace and stability has been restored. We are taking steps to ensure a smooth transition to a peaceful, democratic modern state.

Myanmar places the highest priority on national reconciliation to achieve unity among the 135 national races. In order to strengthen ties and promote economic and social development of the national races inhabiting the border areas the Government has expended 58 billion Kyats and over 550 million US dollars in infrastructure development that includes communication networks and education and health facilities promoting the quality of life of those citizens.

Notwithstanding the unilateral sanctions of some western countries, Myanmar has been able to develop the economy and promote the well-being of its people. We have achieved this, relying mainly on our own resources and with the assistance and cooperation of our neighbours.

Noteworthy advances have been made in the health and education sectors. The country now has 757 hospitals, an increase of 140 hospitals over a span of 15 years. In the past year alone, 22 new hospitals were commissioned. Over the same period the number of colleges and universities in the country has increased from 32 to 154. In these institutes enrolment has risen dramatically from 120,000 to 890,000.

Mr. President,

Allow me now to turn to recent political developments in my country. Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt announced a seven step road map for transition to democracy in August 2003. The road map has been well received in the country as well as by our neighbours. The ASEAN Summit last November

welcomed the commitment of the Myanmar Government to affect a transition to

Once agreement is reached upon the fundamental principles in the National Convention, a new constitution will be drafted. The draft will be put to a referendum for the people of Myanmar to decide. After the adoption of the new Constitution, there will be free and fair elections where the people will elect leaders of their choice.

Mr. President,

The new political structure needs to be strong and resilient, and the country united. The future of the nation cannot be determined by one individual or one party acting alone.

There is no alternative to the National Convention. It is the sole process through which the aspirations of the people of Myanmar for establishing a modern and democratic nation can be fulfilled. We cannot allow the National Convention to be derailed under any circumstances. Failure would plunge the nation into the abyss of anarchy. This is the reason why we place such store on the successful outcome of the National Convention.

We are determined that this vital national endeavour is crowned with success.

I thank you.