

## Civil Society Dialogue Network

# Supporting Myanmar's Evolving Peace Processes: What Roles for Civil Society and the EU?

## Key Recommendations

Brussels, 7 March 2013

This document presents the key recommendations made by participants at the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) meeting *Supporting Myanmar's Evolving Peace Processes: What Roles for Civil Society and the EU?* These recommendations do not necessarily represent the views of the organisers, nor can they be attributed to any individual participant or participating institution. The report and recommendations were collated by the meeting rapporteur, Cecilia Pellosniemi.

### On Myanmar's civil society

- All actors involved in the peace processes should integrate an analytical understanding of the diversity, complexity and evolving dynamics of Myanmar's civil society into their peace process support actions;
- Civil society and the wider public (including the Bamar majority), should participate in a national consultation to develop a shared vision for the future of Myanmar as soon as possible;
- Organised civil society, international NGOs and the international community should not occupy, but rather work to create and protect the space of community-based organisations (CBOs);
- Civil society organisations (CSOs) and CBOs in the provinces and the border regions would benefit from more equal access to information and increased cooperation in matters pertaining to the peace process; the international community could facilitate and support these efforts;
- International donors should be careful not to focus on certain communities only; they should map and analyse traditionally marginalised groups, and identify ways to associate them to the peace process;
- In the areas where open conflict persists, civil society may not be willing to be too visible; this should be dealt with carefully by all actors involved, and anonymity should be guaranteed if needed;
- The Myanmar government should repeal the Illegal Associations Act and enact a more democratic NGO or associations law;
- Civil society networking and exchange of experience on specific peace process issues is valuable and should be encouraged and supported at regional level (South East and South Asia) including through ASEAN and SAARC structures.

### Support to peace processes

- Despite the reforms, civil society feels that the government's understanding of the value and role for civil society within the peace process is limited, and there is a need for genuine engagement and the clarification of the peace structures;
- The peace process should not only take place between the government and the non-state armed groups (NSAGs), but also at the intra-community level through trust-building activities, and recognising the need to include the majority Bamar community;

- All governmental actors, including civil servants and other officials as well as the army, should be equally committed to peace and conflict-sensitive approaches; peace support actors should provide practical assistance to help them in this;
- The separate ceasefire processes should lead to a nation-wide ceasefire agreement (i.e. a Framework Agreement);
- The government and the NSAGs should consult broadly with the communities affected by the cease-fire agreements and make sure their demands are taken into account;
- Participation of women and sensitivity to the different experiences, views and needs of conflict-affected women and men should be built into dialogue processes from the outset;
- The governmental peace structures, including the Union Peace Implementation Committee, the Union Peace Implementation Working Committee, the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) and the parliamentary committees should include women and representatives of ethnic minorities;
- The government and the international donors should make efforts to ensure clarity and transparency concerning the role of the various bodies - not least the MPC - and greater coordination between them;
- An independent body or bodies should oversee implementation of ceasefire agreements and ensure accountability towards affected communities; civil society should play an active role in this;
- The peace process as a whole should take the 2015 elections into account, and with this in mind, its objectives should be limited and workable; the peace process should not end with the elections and the inauguration of a new government;
- Peace process actors should analyse and integrate the private sector: land-use and resource-sharing should be included as topics in the various peace dialogues.

## **EU and international community support to peace**

- The EU's most important asset is its political weight, which it should use to encourage the government to further push democratic reforms; here, it could help in the review of restrictive laws on civil society, and in designing more inclusive peace structures;
- The EU should improve its outreach and communication with Myanmar civil society to better explain the support it provides to all stakeholders in the country, and including opportunities for local organisations to access funding;
- The EU, alongside all international actors, should base its interventions on thorough conflict analysis, including a mapping of all stakeholders, with the aim of conducting conflict sensitive interventions;
- The EU could play a role in facilitating the broadest possible sharing of information on the peace processes and the EU Delegation could organise information meetings for this purpose;
- The EU and the international community, including international NGOs, should support trust-building between local communities by strengthening local capacities for dialogue, and supporting the monitoring of ceasefire agreements;
- The EU should promote and play a leading role in the coordination of external actors and assistance, including practicing transparency about the objectives, activities and results of its assistance to Myanmar.