

**Remarks by Ms. Christine Schraner Burgener,
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar
Security Council, 1 February 2021**

Madam President,
Members of the Security Council,

More than ever, this Council's unity is crucial.

I strongly condemn the recent steps taken by the military and urge all of you to collectively send a clear signal in support of democracy in Myanmar.

I have warned many times that, as we support Myanmar's transition, the urgency in helping lay the foundations of a pluralistic democracy should be balanced with due consideration for the various complex domestic challenges the civilian leadership faces.

We saw a resurgence of civilian-military tensions in relation to the 8 November general election.

While any election period presents challenges, countries as diverse as Myanmar and undergoing democratic transitions following decades of military rule are fragile and it is important to be mindful of the sensitivities as we aim to address our concerns, mainly in restoring Myanmar back on its path to democratic consolidation.

It is equally important that we uphold the Organization's principles.

Although the Commander-in-Chief did initially welcome the successful conduct of the election, the military recently pressed for the Union Election Commission (UEC) and other civilian bodies to investigate alleged election-related violations.

We had earlier encouraged all electoral disputes should be resolved through established legal mechanisms. There appeared to be a commitment on the part of the military to safeguard the rule of law. So the turn of events was surprising and shocking.

I had been in contact with the military leadership as recently as one day before the takeover who mentioned communication was ongoing with the Government and UEC.

Madam President,

I have remained in close contact with the Secretary-General, who has strongly condemned the detention of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, President U Win Myint, and dozens of other political leaders, family members and activists in the early morning of the opening session of Myanmar's new Parliament. I urge for their immediate release.

We are deeply concerned about the declaration of a one-year state of emergency and the transfer of all legislative, executive and judicial powers to the military under the Commander-in-Chief.

As the Secretary-General has highlighted, this is a serious blow to democratic reforms in Myanmar. He had previously stated advancing these reforms required civilian control over the military.

Let us be clear, the recent outcome of the election was a landslide victory for the National League for Democracy (NLD). The NLD won over 82 per cent of parliamentary seats at the union, regional and state levels. This provided a strong renewed mandate to the NLD, reflecting the clear will of the people of Myanmar to continue on the hard-won path of democratic reform.

Any election complaints and appeals should be addressed through existing legal mechanisms professionally and impartially.

The Union Election Commission and dedicated Election Tribunals are the primary mechanisms for addressing election malpractices, while the police and courts are responsible for resolving serious breaches, such as cases of election offenses or crimes defined as such in Hluttaw Election Law and the criminal code.

The Supreme Court was scheduled to pronounce itself this month on its jurisdiction over complaints related to alleged election-related violations.

These processes must be respected.

Madam President,

All actors should gather in good faith to make the process work under the principles of rule of law and democratic framework.

The declaration of the Statement of Emergency and the arrest of civilian leadership are unconstitutional and illegal.

The declaration should be repealed, the detained leaders should be released immediately, and the post-election litigation process should resume with full commitment from all sides.

In this regard, the military's proposal to hold elections again should be discouraged.

It is important that we join our efforts in helping ensure the military respects the will of the people of Myanmar and adheres to democratic norms.

Madam President,

It will be crucial for all actors to refrain from violence, fully respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We cannot allow a full backsliding since Myanmar opened up in 2011.

There are reports of incidents of local journalists being beaten up by crowds. While internet and mobile connections remain unstable, the impartial coverage of events is critical to eventually help facilitate a way out of the crisis.

At this point in time, we must ensure the protection of people of Myanmar and their fundamental rights. We must do everything to prevent violence from breaking out.

In the already harsh conditions created by COVID-19, the people of Myanmar will bear the brunt of these events in their daily lives and are in urgent need of vaccines, humanitarian assistance and economic recovery.

The announcement of the suspension of all flights, including UN relief flights, in and out of Myanmar until the end of April is especially worrying and I fear the consequences for all people in the country, as this may put the critical delivery of COVID-19 vaccines into question.

I call on this Council, especially any members who have influence over the military, to exercise its prevention and human rights obligations in helping ensure lives and civic freedoms are protected.

Madam President,

It is difficult at this stage to share a more detailed assessment as information coming out of Nay Pyi Taw has been extremely limited.

I had hoped to continue my ongoing dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi this week but have not been able to connect yet with her or other detained officials in Nay Pyi Taw.

Ensuring the safety, health and well-being of those detained is critical, especially given COVID-19.

It is all too regretful that the hope of continued progress marked by the 8 November elections, including strengthened United Nations-Myanmar cooperation, has been jeopardized.

A smooth transition of power would have presented a key opportunity to advance action on priority issues including the Rohingya crisis, strengthening of the rule of law, and advancing national reconciliation and human rights protection for all of Myanmar's diverse communities.

In support of the Secretary-General and the State Counsellor's recent commitment to such a partnership in the post-election period, I had been in close contact with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, her advisers and the military to help make this year one of action.

This Council must help address the multifaceted challenges affecting Myanmar and the region. Fundamental to this will be ensuring democracy is expeditiously restored and the country does not fall back into isolation.

Let us never forget that many of the problems in Myanmar taken up by the Security Council came about under almost half a century of military leadership and isolation, at the expense of the people

Madam President,

It has been more than three years since the Secretary-General wrote to the Security Council and highlighted the responsibility of the international community to undertake concerted efforts to prevent the further escalation of instability in Myanmar impacting the region.

I urge the Council to press for restraint and calm to avoid further deterioration of the current situation and to uphold full respect for human rights and international law.

I also count on your collective support for greater access for the United Nations to address dire needs, which could be exacerbated by the current crisis.

I hope to continue my close virtual engagement with key actors in Myanmar maintained even during the pandemic and to help promote political dialogue and a homegrown solution with a view to helping resolve recent tensions and reverse the recent negative developments.

I stand ready to visit as soon as possible and hope this will be accepted as a sign of good faith.

Today we must stand with the people of Myanmar who have already sacrificed so much for democracy and national reconciliation.

Thank you.