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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

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Subject: Council conclusions on forthcoming elections in Myanmar/Burma

At its meeting on 22 June 2015, the Council adopted the Council conclusions on forthcoming elections in Myanmar/Burma, set out in the annex to this note.

Council conclusions on forthcoming elections in Myanmar/Burma

1. The European Union reiterates its strong commitment and continued support for Myanmar/Burma's democratic and economic transition in accordance with the Comprehensive Framework as adopted by the Council on 22 July 2013. It welcomes enhanced EU-Myanmar/Burma cooperation including the holding of two rounds of EU-Myanmar/Burma Human Rights Dialogue, the signing of a framework agreement between the European Investment Bank and the Government of Myanmar/Burma, the ongoing negotiations on an EU-Myanmar/Burma Investment Protection Agreement and the EU recently joining the Initiative to Promote Fundamental Labour Rights and Practices in Myanmar/Burma.
2. Elections in 2015 will be an important milestone in the democratic transition of Myanmar/Burma and an opportunity to confirm that reforms are irreversible. The Council welcomes the holding of political dialogue in various formats between major actors, including the President, the speakers of Parliament, the Commander-in-Chief, the opposition and the ethnic political parties. The conduct of elections in a peaceful environment will contribute towards a democratic Myanmar/Burma based on respect for human rights and rule of law for all its people.
3. The European Union follows closely negotiations between the Government of Myanmar/Burma and ethnic armed groups on the text of a nationwide ceasefire agreement and encourages continued progress towards signature. It encourages all leaders to continue to work together towards peace and national reconciliation, in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Myanmar/Burma.

4. The Council reaffirms its call for the conduct of democratic, inclusive, credible and transparent elections in which all the people of Myanmar/Burma, including persons belonging to minorities, can fully exercise their political rights and cast their vote and where a level playing field is ensured for all candidates. The participation of women in the electoral process should be encouraged. Full respect for fundamental rights including freedoms of expression, association and assembly is key for ensuring an open and inclusive process.
5. Arrangements for former Temporary Registration Card holders should urgently be put in place and their political representation and participation ensured. The disenfranchisement of white card holders risks further fuelling the sentiment of alienation of the Rohingya. A durable solution to the issue of citizenship would also contribute towards addressing the root causes of the migratory crisis in the Andaman Sea. The Council is preoccupied by the dire situation of thousands of migrants in the Andaman Sea and highlights the need for a regional response to save lives and tackle human trafficking.
6. The European Union welcomes the invitation by the Union Election Commission to observe the elections in 2015. It encourages continued consultations between the Union Election Commission and political parties and civil society to ensure the smooth conduct of the elections.
7. The Council appreciates the good cooperation between the Union Election Commission and its international partners in preparing the elections. In this context, the European Union is providing electoral support to bring election management practices in line with international standards. This will cover domestic election monitoring, voter education, public outreach targeting minorities and assistance to develop media capacity. Transparency and unhindered access by media and observers will enhance public confidence in the integrity of the elections.
8. The European Union welcomes the adoption by consensus of resolutions on the 'Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar' in the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council and urges the Government of Myanmar/Burma to implement the recommendations.