



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT

UPDATE REPORT



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MYANMAR

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari briefed the Council on 31 May 2006 on his visit to Myanmar as predicted in our 26 May 2006 Update. After the briefing which took place under “Other Matters” all the European countries, the US, Russia, China, Japan and Ghana made statements. The Council did not take any immediate action. However, the US proposed a draft resolution on which it has begun bilateral consultation and which it is expected to circulate shortly. The details of the resolution are not known but it is expected to call for Aung San Suu Kyi’s release and an inclusive and democratic political process. Other areas that it may cover are release of all political prisoners and humanitarian access.

Gambari’s briefing took place just four days after the Myanmar government chose to extend Suu Kyi’s house arrest for another year in spite of international pressure for her release. Gambari during his meeting with Senior General Tan Shwe had asked for Suu Kyi’s release and the Secretary-General had issued a personal appeal to Than Shwe on Friday. ASEAN, in a rare move away from their policy of non-interference in each other’s domestic affairs, had called for the release of Suu Kyi in December 2005.

Gambari’s main message at the briefing was that while the UN Secretariat is disappointed that his visit had not lead to Suu Kyi’s release, the UN should press ahead and not give up. He also stressed that democratisation and national reconciliation is a process and not an event. He said that the support of the Council was important in helping the Secretariat carry out the good offices of the Secretary-General and that the UN should continue to work with interested member states and partners like ASEAN to continue to push for Suu Kyi’s release.

The Myanmar government’s actions have strengthened the resolve of the US and some European countries to get the Council involved in Myanmar. The US has stated that by extending Suu Kyi’s detention, Myanmar has shown that it is unwilling to engage in a credible and inclusive political process.

At the same time it seems that members like China, Russia and Japan have made it clear that their positions have not changed and that it would be hard for them to accept a resolution. Having action taken on Myanmar under the formal agenda of the Council is still not an option for them. China views the situation in Myanmar as an internal issue that needs to be solved nationally. Japan has also indicated that it would find it difficult to accept a resolution on Myanmar as it sees the situation as a humanitarian and human rights issue that should not be discussed by the Council.

The European countries are likely to see some merit in the US resolution but there is awareness that this is an issue that could polarise the Council without effectively increasing pressure on the authorities in Rangoon. There is also a sense that Gambari's visit has opened up a window of opportunity that should be used productively.

The Council's options now are:

- do nothing and wait for the next opportunity for a briefing;
- negotiate agreed terms for the US draft resolution and table it for adoption on an agenda;
- as an alternative, issue a Presidential Statement if the resolution is not accepted; or
- decide on action short of opening a formal Council agenda e.g. encouraging by way of a letter the Secretary-General's good offices and the appointment of a Special Envoy who would brief the Council in the future and issuing a statement to the press.

For a historical background and a list of documents, please see our 15 December 2005 and 26 May 2006 *Update Reports* on Myanmar.