



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT UPDATE REPORT



12 November 2007 No. 3

Myanmar

Expected Council Action

The Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Myanmar, Ibrahim Gambari is expected to brief the Council on 13 November on his most recent visit to Myanmar which took place from 3 to 8 November.

Like the previous Council meeting with Gambari on 5 October, the one on Tuesday will be a public debate with selected parties such as Myanmar and Singapore, as ASEAN chair, followed by closed consultations. It is likely that the Council will issue a presidential statement within the next week.

Recent Developments

Before visiting Myanmar in early November, Gambari went to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, China and Japan. (Please see our November 2007 *Forecast* for developments before November.)

On 2 November, one day before Gambari's arrival in Myanmar, the government asked Charles Petrie, head of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Myanmar, and the highest ranking UN official based there, to leave the country. This was in reaction to a UNDP statement urging the government to listen to dissenting voices and warning of a "deteriorating humanitarian situation." Petrie is currently expected to leave by the end of the month. The Secretary-General expressed his disappointment that the Myanmar government did not want Petrie to continue in Myanmar and asked Gambari to convey his views to the authorities.

Gambari, while in Myanmar, met with the country's new Prime Minister, General Thein Sein. However, he was not allowed to meet Than Shwe, the head of the ruling State Peace and Development Council and his suggestion that he directly broker talks between Aung San Suu Kyi and the government was publicly rejected. He was also unable to get the government to reverse its decision on Petrie. In addition, he met with foreign diplomats, the International Red Cross and some ethnic minority groups.

Gambari was able to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi and released a statement on her behalf in Singapore on his way back to New York on 8 November. This was her first public message since being placed under house arrest in 2003. In the statement Aung San Suu Kyi said that she was ready to cooperate with the government to make the dialogue process a success and expressed her commitment to pursuing the path of dialogue constructively. At the end of his trip Gambari also issued his own statement in Singapore saying he had established a "process" that would "lead to substantive dialogue" between Aung San Suu Kyi and the generals.

On 9 November Aung San Suu Kyi was allowed for the first time in three years to meet with members from her party, the National League for Democracy. She told them that she was "very optimistic" about the UN's efforts to start talks between the military government and pro-democracy forces. She also met Liaison Minister U Aung Kyi for a second time since he was appointed on 8 October to be her contact with the government.

On 11 November the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, went into Myanmar for the first time in four years for a four-day visit. He is expected to visit prisons and monasteries in an effort to establish the number of people detained and killed in the recent crackdown and assess the overall scale of resulting human rights violations.

Myanmar will be on the agenda at the ASEAN Summit on 20 November and the ASEAN-East Asian Summit (China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand) which takes place the day after. Gambari has been invited to brief the ASEAN-East Asian Summit.

Options

While a presidential statement is the most likely option, the content and tone will very much depend on the details of Gambari's briefing.

- Information that indicates that Myanmar's leaders are taking measures to address the political, economic, humanitarian and human rights issues as asked for in the October statement could result in an encouraging statement reaffirming the Council's support for the good offices role, welcoming any positive developments and reiterating the type of action the Council expects from the Myanmar government. The statement, if issued before the ASEAN Summit, could also encourage ASEAN to play a bigger role in bringing about change in Myanmar.
- On the other hand, if members feel that the response from the Myanmar government has been disappointing or insufficient, a more critical presidential statement is an option. Such a statement could contain a warning of stronger measures in the near future if the government does not seriously move towards dialogue and reconciliation within a stipulated period of time.
- Another option is to ask the Secretary-General to provide information on what more can be done to support Gambari's good offices role and to elaborate on some of the possible structures that are being suggested, such as a Group of Friends.
- A possible option if the Council wants a reading on the human rights situation in the aftermath of the recent events, in particular the early release of prisoners called for in the Council's October presidential statement, is to ask Pinheiro to brief it after his visit.

Key Issues

The key issue for the Council is balancing the need to give the good offices process enough time to show results and maintaining pressure on the Myanmar government.

An emerging issue is whether a carrot-and-stick approach or a sanctions-based path is likely to be more effective in encouraging the Myanmar government to establish a meaningful dialogue between the government and opposition leaders.

A related issue for the Council is how to accurately read the Myanmar government's actions in order to determine the most effective action to take. The government has sent some mixed messages by releasing prisoners ahead of Gambari's visit and then deciding to expel Petrie just a day before of Gambari's arrival. Observers are uncertain whether moves to allow Aung San Suu Kyi contact with her party officials are genuine moves towards dialogue or a tactic to deflect international pressure.

Council and Wider Dynamics

If it appears that the good offices process is showing concrete results, members are likely to agree on the need to be more encouraging and to hold off on stronger action. However, if it appears that the Myanmar government is not taking the UN's requests seriously, then Council members are likely to be divided over how to proceed.

While the P3 (US, UK and France) are generally on the same page on this issue, differences are emerging. Some in Washington believe sanctions are the best route while the UK and France appear willing to explore the possibility of incentives being offered as a carrot if there is significant progress.

China feels that there has been some progress made with Gambari's second trip. It sees Gambari's good offices route as the main track for working with the Myanmar government and is open to action that could strengthen it.

Many members—including some of the permanent members—are keen for Indonesia to step up its involvement as there is a growing perception that Indonesia, as a member of ASEAN and a regional player, is in a prime position to lead on this issue. Indonesia on its part appears more open to playing an active role and is well positioned this month as president of the Council to try and broker agreement on Council action.

UN Documents

Presidential Statement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S/PRST/2007/37 (11 October 2007) was the presidential statement strongly deploring the use of violence against demonstrations and emphasising the importance of early release of prisoners.
Selected Letters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S/2007/591 (5 October 2007) was the letter from Japanese permanent representative to the UN conveying Japan's position on developments in Myanmar. S/2007/590 (3 October 2007) was the letter from US permanent representative to the UN requesting an urgent meeting of the Council to discuss Myanmar.
Draft Resolution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S/2007/14 (12 January 2007) was the draft resolution vetoed by China and Russia.
Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S/PV.5757 (11 October 2007) was the record of a meeting in which the October presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/37) was publicly read. S/PV.5753 (5 October 2007) was the record of the discussion following the crackdown in Myanmar. S/PV.5526 (15 September 2006) was the record of the discussion before putting the provisional agenda, that included the situation on Myanmar, to the vote. S/Agenda/5526 (15 September 2006) was the provisional agenda for the meeting that added Myanmar to the Council agenda.
Selected General Assembly Resolution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A/RES/59/263 (23 December 2004) requested the Secretary-General to provide his good offices and pursue his discussions with the government and people of Myanmar.

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