



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
TO THE UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

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Ms. Jo Becker
Advocacy Director
Children's Right Division
Human Rights Watch
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12 September 2007

Dear Ms. Jo Becker,

I refer to your letter of 22 August 2007 addressed to the Permanent Representative of the Union of Myanmar in which you requested information relating to allegations regarding the recruitment of children as soldiers in Myanmar.

In this regard, I recall that, in 2002, you requested similar information and my predecessor, Mr. Nyunt Swe, Counsellor for Public Affairs, had responded by providing detailed information. We are greatly disappointed that none of the facts that were provided to you was reflected in the report. Instead, the facts given to you were relegated to the annex. We have therefore compelled to conclude that any new information provided will also suffer the same treatment.

Your previous report reflects with inaccuracies. Therefore, I would like you at least to include the facts that are presented in the reports of the UN Agencies after their representatives have visited Myanmar.

In this connection, I wish to inform you that Mr. Kul Gautam, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, and Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, visited Myanmar in August 2006 and in June 2007, respectively.

Let me quote what UNICEF mentioned in its report, entitled "Annual report of the Executive Director: progress and achievements against the medium-term strategic plan" (E/ICEF/2007/9), to the Executive Board of UNICEF. The report stated that "In Myanmar, UNICEF has obtained a commitment from the Secretary of

the State Peace and Development Council that no one below 18 years of age would be recruited into the Military."

The report of the visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to Myanmar contained the following with regard to the Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Children: -

"The Committee was formed by the Office of the Chairman of the SPDC, by its letter No. 205/Na Ya Ka Oo/Ka Sa, dated 05 January 2004. The Chairman of the Committee is the Secretary-One of the State Peace and Development Council and it includes as its members:

1. Minister for Home Affairs
2. Minister for Foreign Affairs
3. Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement
4. Minister of Labour
5. Deputy Chief of Justice
6. Deputy Attorney-General
7. Judge Advocate-General of the Ministry of Defense
8. Vice Chief of Armed Forces Training of the Ministry of Defense
9. Senior Officer of the Ministry of Defense (serving as Committee Secretary)

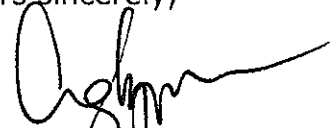
The Objectives of the Committee are to prevent forced recruitment of under-age children as soldiers and to ensure adherence to orders and instructions issued for the protection of under-age children. Under Directive No. 13/73 of the Defense Council of Burma, dated 8 April 1974, a person must have attained the age of 18 years for enlistment into the armed forces of Burma.

The Committee, at its first meeting in 2004, drew up an "action plan" which included the establishment, in July 2004, of a Directorate of Military strength to "...examine systematically whether recruitment conforms to orders, instructions, rules and regulations issued by the Ministry of Defense...one of the primary functions [of which] is to ensure that no one under 18 years of age is recruited into the armed forces". The action plan also deals with the discharge from military service of under-age recruits and their re-integration into their homes. Finally, the action plan addresses measures for public awareness regarding prevention of under-age recruitment at the national and local levels. It is worthwhile to note that the action plan also briefly mentions accountability for under-age recruitment, although measures have not been defined to date. The Directorate of Military strength is

mandated to report quarterly on its activities and to respond to any other reporting requirements the Committee on the Prevention of Underage Recruitment puts forward."

Further information can be found in the report of the Visit of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to Myanmar which is available at the website of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aung Lynn', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

(Aung Lynn)

Minister Counsellor

Public Affairs