

For Immediate Release: Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2007

## JOINT STATEMENT FROM MYANMAR

We, the undersigned humanitarian organisations working in Myanmar, are saddened and deeply concerned by the recent events in Myanmar. As organisations working on humanitarian issues, we feel it is imperative to express our views on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country, which has contributed to the events. We urge all parties to increase their efforts to address the underlying causes of the current situation.

The recent increase in fuel prices, which triggered the events, has further exacerbated the already fragile living conditions faced by many people in Myanmar. Current social and economic policies have led to conditions which have pushed many below subsistence levels, continuously weakening existing coping mechanisms of local communities.

This is compounded by the lack of investment at the scale needed to meet the needs of the people. Low public expenditure in the health and education sectors leave people with little to no access to basic affordable services in many parts of the country. In the absence of adequate public services, civil society groups have attempted to respond to local needs but are constrained in their ability to operate formally.

Despite efforts by the humanitarian community to provide international humanitarian assistance, the level of support is highly insufficient, programmes are too narrowly defined and the humanitarian space for organisations to operate is frequently at risk. Although international humanitarian organisations have been able to develop and expand their actions, there are restrictions placed on the geographical and sectoral coverage of their operations.

We believe that the above factors have contributed to the existing humanitarian crisis. It is essential to consolidate and sustain existing programmes as well as to reassess and seek new ways to expand and work together to better serve the people of Myanmar.

We thus appeal for:

- strengthened public sector policies that optimise responses to the humanitarian needs of vulnerable people including increased public expenditure in health, education and sustainable livelihoods;
- improved operating environment for local and international humanitarian organisations; and
- significantly scaled-up international humanitarian assistance to directly address the needs of the poor.

### Under-signed humanitarian NGOs:

Action Contre la Faim, Aide Medicale Internationale, Asian Harm Reduction Network, CESVI, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe/German Agro Action, Enfants du Monde Droits de l'Homme, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Malteser International, Medecins du Monde, Norwegian People's Aid, Population Services International, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes Italia.

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