Ministry of Foreign Affairs releases Press Statement in response to the declaration of EU Presidency

Nay Pyi Taw, 13 June- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar released a Press Statement in response to the declaration on Myanmar issued by the European Union (EU) Presidency on 11 June.

The Press Statement released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is as follows:-

The European Union (EU) Presidency issued a declaration on 11th June 2009 voicing its unwarranted concern at the alleged mounting offensive of the Myanmar Army and its allies against the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) in the Myanmar-Thai border areas which resulted in large numbers of so-called civilians fleeing from the conflict area in Kayin State to Thailand.

It is quite obvious that the EU's declaration must have been based on inaccurate news emanated from the insurgent groups. The tone and tenor of the declaration obviously reflects the total ignorance of EU Presidency on the true facts and main causes of the clashes between the two factions of the armed groups.

The internal insurgency problem that plagued the Union of Myanmar for over four decades since its regaining of independence in 1948, was in fact resulted from the ill legacies of the divide and rule administrative policy of the colonialists in the past history. As the main national objectives of the Government of the Union of Myanmar are non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and the perpetuation of sovereignty, the Government has been making all out efforts to further consolidation of the Union.

Therefore, with a view to consolidating national unity, the Government of the Union of Myanmar has since 1989 abandoned military solution against the problems of armed groups confronted by the successive governments and made peace overtures to all of them to exchange arms for peace. As a result, 17 out of 18 armed groups have returned to the legal fold and are now working together with the Government for regional development.
There remains only one single armed group, i.e. Kayin National Union (KNU) outside legal fold. Many of its splintered groups including Democratic Kayin Buddhist Association (DKBA) and many others have returned to the legal fold one after another. More than 300 members from KNU led by Chairman of the Peace Council of the KNU/KNLA Maj-Gen Htein Maung returned to the legal fold in February 2007. Also in March 2009, altogether 71 members led by Saw Nay Soe Mya, son of former KNU/KNLA Chairman late Saw Bo Mya of KNU along with 88 family members had also followed suit. There are also a growing number of members of KNU/KNLA wishing to make peace with the Government.

The recent scuffles that took place in the eastern border were ignited by the members of the KNU/KNLA forces stationing inside the Thai territory who had attempted to forcibly prevent the remaining KNU/KNLA members of Saw Nay Soe Mya's group who are desirous of returning to the legal fold. As a matter of fact, the fighting took place between the two armed groups—DKBA and KNU/KNLA. Members of the Government armed forces had no role whatsoever in the recent scuffles. Therefore, the allegations mentioned in the EU's declaration that the Government troops were mounting offensive against the Kayin ethnic minority were untrue and unfounded.

As the remnants of the KNU/KNLA forces are hiding in some pockets of remote areas near Myanmar-Thai border where no civilian resides, it is obvious that those who fled across border are none other than members of KNU/KNLA and their families. Thus, there is no cross-border fleeing of civilians as alleged by the EU's declaration. Ignoring these facts, some media are making misleading reports depicting the members of the KNU/KNLA forces and their families who fled across border as Kayin refugees with an aim to exerting added political pressure on Myanmar.

Thus, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar is disappointed with the politically motivated declaration of the EU Presidency which was released without a thorough study of Myanmar's insurgency problem. Therefore, the Ministry categorically rejects the factually incorrect declaration made by the EU Presidency relying on inaccurate information originated from the insurgent groups and biased media reports.

Permanent Mission of the Union of Myanmar
Geneva
15 June 2009.