

**Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma
Statement by the Delegation of the United States of America
Human Rights Council**

**UN Human Rights Council – 19th Session
Geneva
March 12, 2012**

The United States welcomes the report of Special Rapporteur Ojea Quintana and thanks him for all of his work. The United States welcomes his visits to Burma in August 2011 and February 2012, and the cooperation he received from the government, and we hope that authorities will continue to cooperate and consider working with Mr. Quintana, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and other thematic special rapporteurs for assistance on how to best implement mechanisms that promote and protect human rights.

The Special Rapporteur's report describes an improving human rights situation, but notes that considerable challenges remain. Serious human rights abuses continue, particularly in ethnic minority areas.

The Special Rapporteur highlights abuses committed by all sides in the conflict areas and underscores the importance of providing unrestricted humanitarian access to those displaced and affected by conflict, including in Kachin State. The United States urges the government to allow unfettered access to conflict zones, particularly for the UN, international humanitarian organizations, and journalists. We support the government's outreach to ethnic minority groups and are encouraging the government's genuine dialogue with ethnic minority groups toward national reconciliation; we welcome the Special Rapporteur's thoughts on mechanisms that might further the reconciliation process.

The Special Rapporteur's report also focused on the upcoming by-elections scheduled for April 1. A credible, free, and fair electoral process—from the campaign period to the announcement of election results—are an important benchmark on the road to reform. We strongly urge the government to allow independent international monitors to observe the

elections and to ensure reports of campaign irregularities and restrictions on campaign activities mentioned in the Special Rapporteur's report are addressed.

Like the Special Rapportuer, we are encouraged by legislative reforms that give more freedoms to civil society, and continue to emphasize the importance of effective implementing regulations. We support the suggestion that the government develop a strategy for continuing legislative reform to review and revise, where needed, existing laws including by engaging multiple stakeholders. In addition, we share the Special Rapporteur's concerns regarding the independence of the judiciary and rule of law. An independent judiciary that upholds the rule of law is an important safeguard for fundamental freedoms and development of the country. We support his calls for the government to seek technical assistance from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other human rights organizations.

We would welcome Special Rapporteur Quintana's recommendations for actions that can be taken to strengthen rule of law across the country.

We urge the government to consider implementing UPR recommendations, including recommendations to combat impunity and increase cooperation with the United Nations. The UPR process is an avenue through which to further the government's progress on human rights issues.

Special Rapporteur Quintana, the United States would like to thank you for your work and express our support for the continuation of your mandate. We welcome your views on useful next steps in advancing your mandate.

Thank you, Madame President.