HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: DRAFT UK STATEMENT ON BURMA

11 December 2007

Thank you Mr President:

I would like to align myself with the statement made by the [Ambassador / representative] of Portugal on behalf of the EU and express thanks to Professor Pinheiro. We are pleased that he has been able to gain access to the country after a protracted period and we are grateful for the report of his recent visit.

I have raised the United Kingdom's concerns about the human rights situation in Burma on several occasions before this council. We continue to regard the situation in Burma as being of the utmost gravity. This assessment, which I know is shared in this Council and in the wider international community, is further substantiated by Professor Pinheiro's report on the events of September this year. The references to killings through use of excessive force between 26-29 September; to the extremely high number of arrests of peaceful protesters and political activists, as well members of their families; and to cases of disappearances should all give this Council cause for great alarm.

We are also disturbed by Professor Pinheiro's accounts of new arrests of political activists carried out since the Government of Burma /Myanmar assured UN Special Envoy Gambari during his visit in November that these would cease. We join others in the condemnation of these arrests.

I urge the government of Burma to comply fully with the Rapporteur's recommendations as well as those of the Special Session itself and call upon the Council to take the necessary action to ensure appropriate follow up to Professor Pinheiro's visit.

Thank you Mr President

We appreciate the engagement of Burmese authorities. This should not go unremarked. We hope this can be the beginning of a process of engagement with the HRC, and other international actors in pursuit of what should be the objective of us all; to improve the situation on the ground for the benefit of the people of Burmese/Mayanmar.