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**Palaung State Liberation Front**

**Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF/TNLA) Political Letter to Union Peace Conference  
(21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong)**

To/

**The Union Peace Conference (21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong)**



**August 31, 2016**

**Letter no. 10/U/CSQ-2016**

**SUBJECT: Submitting Our Palaung State Liberation Front’s (PSLF/TNLA) Position, relating to Ending the Fire of Over 60-year Long Civil War and Establishing a Democratic Federal Union, in Accordance with Agreements Gained from the Political Dialogue.**

First, we extend our greetings and wishes for success to members of the government, political parties, parliament, ethnic armed resistance organizations and the international community to be able to initiate the way for ending the civil war and gaining political agreements that could represent the entire people made up of the ethnic nationalities.

Our Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF/TNLA) does not have the permission to attend the Conference as we could not issue a position statement as desired by Myanmar Tatmadaw (Mynamar Army) in the Union of Myanmar Peace Commission. However, our organization hopes that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference would get political results that could resolve political problem of Myanmar through dialogue.

We send our organization’s political positions to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference in the form of an open letter as follows, so that the fire of over 60-year long civil war would be ended for good, and common political agreements, all could be involved in and accept, be gained.

**Ending Over 60 -Year Long Civil War for Good, and the NCA**

The fire of civil war in Myanmar has come to approach a century mark and the country is becoming a land with the World’s longest civil war. Due to the successive Myanmar governments and Myanmar Tatmadaw leaders’ incorrect undertaking of ceasefire, policies and principles, the fire of war has continued to burn even now, in lands of the ethnic nationalities. By continuing the fire of civil war, the military has been pushed to occupy the most important role in the political affairs of the country, and the hold on power by military leaders has been dogmatically maintained.

Under various headings such as ‘Exchange of Arms for Democracy’ - ‘Exchange of Arms for Peace’ – ‘Renouncing Arms and Entering the Legal Fold’ etc. the successive Myanmar governments and military leaders have undertaken to get ceasefire of the ethnic armed organizations. All such undertakings ended in futility and, at a point in time, there was the crumbling of trust and resumption of armed conflict.

During the time of U Thein Sein government, which came into being in accordance with the 2008 Constitution, ceasefire was able to be made with a number of ethnic armed organizations, at the state and union levels. From then on, in order to be able to establish nationwide ceasefire, talks were begun, towards the end of 2013. In March 2015, the Myanmar government’s Union Peace-making

Work Committee (UPWC) and the Ethnic Armed Resistance Organizations (EAROs) were able to reach up to the level of agreeing on a draft of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

Though such a draft as NCA, which was important for peace in Myanmar country, was gained, due to Myanmar Tatmadaw's unreasonable position of wanting to continue to keep the civil war, not all the ethnic organizations got the permission to sign it. U Thein Sein government left out the organizations, with which it had continuing armed conflict, and sign the NCA with only 8 ethnic organizations on October 15, 2015.

Right after the signing of NCA, Myanmar Tatmadaw made the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS/SSA), which was based in Southern Shan State, to expand in massive force in the operational area of the Ta'ang National Liberation Army's (TNLA) in Ta'ang (Palaung) Region, in Northern Shan State, and pushed the situation to a state of armed conflict between fellow ethnic nationalities. Instead of stopping armed conflicts, the NCA escalated them and complicated more the armed conflict in the country.

The Myanmar government and Myanmar Tatmadaw included terms in the NCA, which they wanted to implement to their liking, and drew up the Framework for Political Dialogue to the liking of the Myanmar leaders and convened the Union Peace Conference, which did not produce any result. They did that purposely so that the remaining ethnic armed resistance organizations might not be able to continue to be related to the NCA, which had been gained.

Myanmar Tatmadaw's six peace principles and policy requiring the Ethnic Armed Resistance Organizations (EAROs) to renounce arms for peace cannot in any way stop the civil war and the NCA also will no longer end the armed conflicts, due to the amending of it by Myanmar Tatmadaw to its liking.

### **Role of National Defense and Renouncing Arms**

Only if the civil war is stopped and the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and the Security Sector Reform (SSR) in relation to national defense are carried out, genuine peace will be really gained. However, it would not be possible if only one side is pressured in carrying out the programs. Only after all the armed organizations, including Myanmar Tatmadaw, have gained a concrete political agreement, the DDR and SSR must be carried out, with thorough consultations.

The Myanmar military leaders have made only the Myanmar Tatmadaw to be responsible for the security and defense role of the nation and the states. Myanmar Tatmadaw has been convinced that the acts of military offensives and attempt at the annihilation of our ethnic armed resistance organizations are in defense of the nation.

Successive Myanmar military leaders have pressured the ethnic armed resistance organizations together with making rosy promises and various kinds of tricks to lay down arms, renounce arms, enter the legal fold, exchange arms for peace, exchange arms for democracy etc. Though some ethnic organizations had totally collapsed under those tactics, as there was no political resolution, more powerful armed resistances have reemerged.

Our Ta'ang nationality's former armed force, the PSLA, was forcibly disarmed in 2005. Though all the arms were abandoned like that, there really was no peace in Ta'ang Region. After there was no armed force to protect the Ta'ang nationality, there were military domination by Myanmar Tatmadaw,

armed oppression by other ethnic armed organizations and the gravely burgeoning narcotic drugs problem, and in response to those problems, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) was formed, with the cooperation of Ta'ang people, and activities were started.

Accordingly, the Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF/TNLA) shall never lay down arms or renounce arms, at any time or under any circumstance. For the national security of the Ta'ang nationality - being political security, regional security, economic security, cultural security, developmental security etc., our Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) shall firmly stand up and defend, at all cost.

Myanmar Tatmadaw's national defense role of attacking and annihilating the ethnic nationalities and the policy of pressuring them to renounce arms for peace, lead only to the growth of civil war and conflict.

### **Institution of Union State Based on Common Political Agreement**

In resolving the political problem by political means through dialogue, effort must be made to obtain common political agreements that can cover the entire people made up of ethnic nationalities. Practical realization is to be made by including those common political agreements obtained, as provisions in the union constitution.

Though the Union of Myanmar has been governed with three constitutions of the 1947, 1974 and 2008 Constitutions, as they are not based on the common political agreement of all-inclusiveness, the country has been far from peace and full with sounds of battle.

The ethnic resistance organizations and democratic forces had drawn up a federal constitution (Draft) based on the 1992 Mannerplaw Agreement and Mae Tharawta Agreement. Later in 2006, the FCDCC committee, consisting of representatives from different strata of the society, such as the ethnic resistance force, democratic force, youths, women force, community based forces etc. deliberated on that constitution again, and adopted it. In the draft amended in 2006, together by the FCDCC and UNFC, provisions for forming new constituent states were added and, in the formation of new constituent states of the union, provisions are made for forming states representing a nationality and states representing nationalities. Moreover, it was agreed that each and every state was to have a constitution and to apply it in practice.

The 8 points, on which the writing of a federal constitution was to be based, were laid down and agreed upon, and finally they were reconfirmed also by the 2016-Mai Jayan plenary meeting. Those 8 points are:

- (1) Sovereign Power;
- (2) Equality;
- (3) Self-determination;
- (4) Federal Principles;
- (5) Minority Rights;
- (6) Democratic Rights, Basic Human Rights and Gender Equality;
- (7) Secular State; and
- (8) Multi-party Democratic System. Our PSLF/TNLA had participated in all the levels of this endeavor of writing a federal constitution. For that reason, our PSLF/TNLA have already

supported and agreed upon the Federal Constitution (Draft), agreed upon and proposed by resistance organizations of the ethnic nationalities.

In the formation of constituent states of the union, we cannot accept the principle of eight states or the union of 7 states and 7 regions, and it should be the formation of the constituent states representing a nationality and nationalities. It is necessary to form states for the nationalities, which are up to the specified criteria. The union is to take and exercise the highest powers, the self-determination rights of the states are to be recognized and it is necessary for them to be able to exercise power, in practice. Every state should get fully the rights to maintain, protect and manage its own land, natural resources, nationality, culture and traditional practices.

### **Establishment of New States of Ethnic Minorities**

We are firmly convinced that in resolving the political problems of Myanmar country and those of the ethnic nationalities, instead of keeping the number of the states fixed and forming them dogmatically, it is necessary to be able for us to establish new states, as necessary, after thorough discussions.

As one of the main aims of the federal system is for enabling the practice of democratic and human rights at the basic local levels, the powers are shared out, as much as possible, to different levels, and states and districts have to be instituted. For that reason, the establishment of states and the powers are made to be shared and exercised, mean empowerment of the respective nationality and the local people to exercise their right of self-determination in practice and, in addition to strengthening democracy, the process also reinforces the rule of law.

In Myanmar country, where several nationalities live, as the ethnic minorities are being divided and oppressed by various means and as protection is not given to them, all kinds of problems have arisen and peace has been deprived. Accordingly, it is necessary to protect the rights of the ethnic minorities, as much as possible, and it is necessary to establish a new state with self-determination, for a nationality, which has the capability to subsist as a state.

The establishment of new states like that cannot cause the disintegration of the union or racial strife. Contrary to the suggestion made by propaganda of the Myanmar dictators, it is not necessary to establish 135 states for the 135 ethnic nationalities. Also, there are not 135 ethnic nationalities in Myanmar country. The ethnic minorities should not be classified into tiny groups and designated with various ethnic names, in order to make them insignificant and vanish.

Protecting and uplifting minority rights, recognizing them politically and establishing states with self-determination for them would obviate armed conflict and moreover, they would strengthen unity of the union.

### **Ta'ang Nationality and PSLF/TNLA**

The members of Ta'ang (Palaung) nationality have settled down originally and been living in Yunnan Province as well as in the various parts of the country of Myanmar, since many thousand years ago. In Yunnan Province of China, there are more than thirty thousand Ta'ang people and in Myanmar, there are more than a million. Accordingly, the Ta'ang (Palaung) people are one of the ethnic nationalities of China and Myanmar countries.

On January 12, 1963, the Ta'ang people founded the Palaung National Force (PNF) and started the movement. In 1976, the force was transformed into the Palaung State Liberation Organization (PSLO). Due to brutal military offensives by the SLORC army, by various means, the Palaung State Liberation Army had to reach ceasefire agreement with the SLORC on April 21, 1991. Then, on April 29, 2005 the SPDC, the repackaged SLORC, disarmed the PSLA, by use of force and numerous trickeries.

After the ceasefire by PSLA, the Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF) was founded on January 12, 1992, in Marneplaw, with the assistance of the Karen National Union and other revolutionary resistance forces, and the Palaung national liberation struggle was resumed.

As it became urgently essential to have a Palaung armed force for the defense of Ta'ang (Palaung) Region, at the Third Conference of the Front held in October 2009, the formation of the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) was approved and formed with some commanders of the PSLF.

In October 2011, the Ta'ang youths were mobilized and military training for them was started at Wara Bung in the KIA Brigade-3 Area, and on December 23, the Long March from Kachin State to Ta'ang Region was made, and the Ta'ang force, the TNLA, was systematically organized and realized.

The Palaung State Liberation Front – PSLF/TNLA – is striving to achieve the political goals of:

- 1. Liberating all the Ta'ang nationalities from oppression;**
- 2. Establishing a Ta'ang State, with guarantee for democratic and human rights; and**
- 3. Establishing a democratic federal union, with guarantee for self-determination of the nationalities.**

The Palaung State Liberation Front – PSLF/TNLA – for the achievement of the political goals and objectives laid down, is performing with the collective leadership system, within the organization. Due to the support and encouragement by the Ta'ang people, the PSLF/TNLA has been carrying out its work speedily, in the 5-year period, past and present, by forming 12 work departments and 2 work committees. The Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) with 27 battalions, organized into 5 brigades, is based and operating in the hill regions (Currently northern Shan State region), where our Ta'ang people have settled down and lived. As we get increasing support from the people, the number of members of the force is on the increase, day by day.

On July 30, 2013, the PSLF/TNLA Political Negotiation Work Committee (PNWC) had a chance, only once, to meet with the Myanmar government's Union Peace-making Work Committee (UPWC), in Muse Town on the China-Burma border. There is still no possibility to continue the meeting, as the government one-sidedly has pressured us to sign the ceasefire laid down by it, without ending its military offensives in our region.

However, the PSLF/TNLA had participated in the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) and endeavored in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) drafting process, participated by all organizations concerned. Though the Myanmar government has limited the signing of NCA by all organizations concerned, we are continuing our endeavor to get the permission for all to participate.



The PSLF/TNLA, on its part, has accepted the process of resolving the political problem by political means, through negotiation, and has made preparation, in order to participate and perform for the political dialogue, after ceasefire that can be agreed to by the two sides.

Though we would like to attend, together with the other ethnic armed resistance organizations, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference held currently, we have not received the permission to attend, as we could not issue a statement containing a promise, suggesting the renunciation of arms.

### **Concluding Recommendation**

It is necessary to put out finally fire of the over 60-year long civil war in the Union of Myanmar. The fire of civil war has adversely impacted development, caused deeper dissension among the ethnic nationalities and weakened and ruined the union spirit. As trust cannot be established between leaders of political and national affairs, the achievement of common political agreements is still far away.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference should discuss for finding the answer to achieving nationwide ceasefire and stopping all the battles entirely. Even if fighting is happening between Myanmar Tatmadaw and any one ethnic armed resistance organization, the civil war is happening and peace cannot be achieved.

Due to differences in political opinions, the armed resistances have become stronger and effort must be made to gain political agreements all can be involved in and accept, for the armed conflict to end. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conference should make the effort for making the dialogue to become one, participated by all the relevant organizations, for the gaining of such political agreements, all can be involved in and accept. In resolving the political problem of Myanmar country, undertaking should be made by accepting, courageously and definitely, opinions of the people of all the nationalities, so as to be able to make real changes, without managing and manipulating it in the form of total ownership of it by a person, or an organization.

The 1947 Panglong Agreement had achieved the unity of the States and Proper Part of the country and had given birth to the Union of Myanmar. However, as the promises and pledges of Panglong were broken, the country cannot struggle out of the more than half-a-century long civil war. In addition to the condition that not all the ethnic armed resistance forces do not get the permission to participate in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference held currently, the Myanmar Tatmadaw's specified principles for peace are, in fact, a serious hindrance to progress.

For that reason, the political views and opinions of our Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF/TNLA) are respectfully sent to recommend that it is necessary for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference to reform and change things that should be changed, courageously and decidedly, as finding political solution, to the liking of Myanmar military leaders, has been leading just to the breakup and failure of the Union.

**Central Executive Committee  
Palaung State Liberation Front  
PSLF/TNLA  
August 31, 2016**