



THE SIXTH DPN-PC MEETING: PROGRESS MADE BUT AGREEMENT ELUSIVE

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The Delegation for Political Negotiation (DPN) of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) and the Peace Commission (PC) of the Government of Myanmar held their 6th formal meeting on August 10-11, 2017 at the National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC) in Yangon. At the meeting, the parties negotiated the 9-point proposal by the UNFC in order to enable its members to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in good conscience. According to the joint statement published after the meeting, both sides negotiated openly and were able to build more mutual understanding and trust. While informal talks continue, the delegations will take the negotiation results back to their respective leadership bodies and tentatively schedule the 7th formal meeting for early September.

Of the 9 points negotiated, Points 1 to 4 were agreed upon in principle, according to a government spokesperson. Points 1 and 2 deal with the declaration of a nationwide ceasefire upon the signing of NCA by both sides and the establishment of federal democratic union based on the principles of freedom, equality, justice, and the spirit of the original Panglong Agreement. Point 3 proposes a restructured tripartite political dialogue process, which would be secured in the ongoing process to amend the Framework for Political Dialogue. Point 4 proposes the amendment of the current constitution and other laws based on the results of the political dialogue incorporated into the Union Accord.

However, the parties were not able to reach an agreement on the most immediate DPN concerns regarding ceasefire monitoring, a military code of conduct, demarcation, and troop relocation as proposed in Points 5, 6, and 7. While the DPN proposed that mechanisms to address the above concerns be put in place prior to the signing of the NCA, the government argued against this proposal. The DPN proposed an independent committee of foreign government representatives, international organization representatives, and international experts to serve as advisors, observers, and technical supporters in the implementation of the activities of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) at all levels. The government, however, would not accept any independent monitoring committee other than peace actors already active in the peace process through the United Nations programs. Furthermore, no agreement was reached on DPN's proposal to have an independent dispute resolution commission comprised of national and international legal experts and judges.

By number of Points agreed, it seems significant progress has been made. However, as no agreement was reached on the several Points addressing pressing concerns with the ceasefire monitoring process, deadlock remains. Observing the current peace process and the difficulties faced by NCA signatories, it appears that DPN would rather wait to ensure the process is accountable and their participation meaningful before signing the NCA. However, there is still optimism that a solution will be reached through further talks, both formal and informal.

¹ Henceforth, ENAC Briefings will be retitled "ENAC News Brief" and focus more exclusively on recent happenings in the peace process and the democratic development of Burma.