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UNITED NATIONALITIES FEDERAL COUNCIL (UNION OF BURMA)

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Briefing Paper: The UNFC's Continuing Role to Seek the Federal Union

Since the announcement that two members of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) would sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and their subsequent signing of the agreement on February 13, 2018, there has been confusing and contradictory information published about the current and future role of the UNFC. This briefing paper seeks to clarify the UNFC's membership and purpose, providing the most up-to-date facts that have emerged from the discussions and decisions of its member EAOs and the recently concluded Federal Council meeting.¹

The UNFC maintains its basic purpose and retains its existing members

The UNFC's goal is to establish the genuine federal union based on democracy, equal rights, and self-determination. This goal has not changed. The aspiration of establishing a federal union unites all ethnic nationalities, regardless of whether they have signed the NCA or whether they are members of the UNFC. The UNFC follows the path and policy that would best lead to the emergence of a genuine federal union. The central component of that strategy is supporting ethnic unity, even though each EAO's situation may require taking different decisions on certain matters. The UNFC has reaffirmed that it is committed to the peace process and is on the NCA path.

The UNFC member organizations have also listened to advice from other ethnic stakeholders, especially the ethnic political parties and the Northern Alliance, who have urged the UNFC to remain together and uphold ethnic unity. These partners seek collaboration with the UNFC and recognize that different groups may face different situations and pressures, but that we all seek a common goal.

Contrary to media reports, no member organizations have left the UNFC. As stated in press releases number 1 and 2 of 2018, the first and second portions of the second regular Council Meeting were attended by all UNFC members: the New Mon State Party (NMSP), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), Lahu Democratic Union (LDU), Shan State Progress Party (SSPP), and Arakan National Council (ANC), as well as a representative from Kachin

¹ See the UNFC Press Release No. 2/2018, February 25, 2018, on the conclusion of the Federal Council meeting.

Independence Organization (KIO), an associate alliance member organization. The KIO had submitted its letter requesting to resign from the UNFC prior to the June Congress, and the Congress amended the UNFC constitution to create the “associate alliance member” status for the KIO, enabling its representatives to attend and provide advice at UNFC meetings.

In an effort to encourage unity and pursue our common goal, the UNFC will welcome back previous members, the Kachin National Organization (KNO) and Chin National Front (CNF), when the interim congress is held later in 2018. The KNO joined the UNFC as a KIO representative member when it merged with the KIO.

The CNF’s UNFC membership was temporarily suspended after it signed the NCA in 2015. The situation today is different. The northern organizations have sought an alternative path, and the NMSP and LDU have signed the NCA. The UNFC continues to pursue the NCA path with flexibility to maintain unity across different EAOs’ circumstances to achieve more successful negotiation and NCA implementation based on unity.

The UNFC has worked consistently to develop collective federal principles and policies. This work will continue and is essential to achieving peace for the whole country. Ethnic unity is not based solely on the UNFC, but the UNFC will continue to promote unity and cooperation to achieve our common goals.

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