

## Statement From European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma

17 October 2011

### Burma Political Prisoner Releases Not Enough To Justify Lifting of Sanctions

The European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma (EPCB) welcomes the release of around 200 political prisoners in Burma. The release of all political prisoners, along with the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire, are essential first steps in creating a climate in which there can be a genuine dialogue process to solve political problems in the country.

However, by releasing so few political prisoners, President Thein Sein has not gone beyond similar releases already undertaken by his predecessors, which had no broader political significance. In fact, Than Shwe released 427 political prisoners when he came to power in 1992. Most political prisoners remain in jail, are kept in appalling conditions, and denied proper medical care. Many have been moved to remote prisons days travel away from their families. Despite the facts, Thein Sein's government continues to deny political prisoners even exist in the country.

While the release of any political prisoner should be welcomed, the releases that have taken place in Burma this week do not justify the lifting of any diplomatic or economic sanctions currently applied by the European Union. Premature lifting of any sanctions could undermine the prospects of further and larger political prisoner releases. Political prisoners are not bargaining chips. The release of all political prisoners must remain one of the core benchmarks for the European Union and international community.

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**About EPCB:** *The European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma was founded in June 2008 to raise awareness on Burma in Europe and promote human rights and democracy in Burma. It represents 16 European countries with more than 160 MPs. Administrative support for the European Parliamentary caucus on Burma is being provided by Burma Campaign UK and People in Need in the Czech Republic.*

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