



# LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

## A summary of Burma-related issues in the British Parliament and Europe

FEB  
2008

### COMMONS HANSARD DEBATE

#### *Role of China and India*

**19 February: Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) (Lab):** The UN special envoy on Burma is touring ASEAN countries in an attempt to get them to act together in relation to Burma, and he has confirmed that India and China have the most leverage over Burma. What influence are we exercising over India and China to get them to exercise that leverage?

**Meg Munn:** My right hon. Friend is right. The role of India and China in seeking to influence what takes place in Burma is enormously important. The topic of Burma is raised whenever we have contact through my noble Friend Lord Malloch-Brown in relation to China and India. The Prime Minister raised the matter when he was in China, and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will also do so on his visit to China.

#### *EU Foreign Policy*

**20 February: Mr Hague:** Across the House, we wish that the approach to foreign policy of EU members had a more forceful unity in facing up to Iran's development of nuclear weapons capability and the crimes of regimes such as those in Zimbabwe and Burma. There is no hostility to the co-operation of member states as nation states on a wide range of important issues. As the Foreign Secretary rightly said, that can be a means of implementing our foreign policy here in Britain. The vast majority of us in this House, including the Government, have always opposed the introduction of treaty changes that increase the role of the EU at the expense of member states and of institutions that go beyond supplementing co-operation and supplant it with supranational decision making.

#### *Human Rights Abuses*

**21 February: John Bercow (Buckingham) (Con):** May we have a debate in Government time on the Floor of the House on the serial abuse of human rights in Burma and the continuing political crisis in that country? Given that only last week the vice-chairman of the Karen National Union, Padoh Mahn Sha, was assassinated at the instigation of the sadistic military dictatorship, would not such a debate allow us in detail to expose the systematic abuse of human rights, to highlight for the sham that it is the proposed political reform in that country and to chart the way to salvation with freedom, peace and justice for the long-suffering people of Burma?

**Helen Goodman:** The hon. Gentleman is a doughty campaigner for the people of Burma. His concerns were shared across the House when we had a debate on the issue only a few months ago, but I understand that the situation is changing and I shall raise the matter in the Foreign Office.

#### *Treaty of Lisbon*

**26 February: Mr Murphy:** Finally, we want the EU to engage more effectively internationally, in respect of Burma, Zimbabwe, Iran and many other places around the globe. That is why we welcome the creation of the post of high representative for foreign affairs, who will be answerable, ultimately, to member states.

#### *Climate Change*

**27 February: Mr Woolas:** Let me address some of the substantial policy and political issues. The hon. Member for Beverley and Holderness (Mr. Stuart) correctly stated that it was wrong to say that the scientific

debate was over. There are some who still disagree. Across the world, all countries with the exception of Burma now accept the scientific evidence of man-made climate change as a reality.

## COMMONS WRITTEN ANSWERS

### *Departmental Foreign Workers*

**4 February: Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many UK staff his Department employs in each country overseas.

**Mr. Douglas Alexander:** The number of UK staff employed by the Department for International Development (DFID) in each country overseas, is shown in the following table:

DFID country offices—full delegated authority

Country	All HCS
Afghanistan	24
Bangladesh	22
Burma	3
Burundi	3

### *Political Situation; Burma*

**19 February : Ann Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the political situation in Burma.

**Meg Munn:** The Government are deeply concerned at the continued lack of progress towards democracy in Burma. On 9 February the Burmese regime announced its intention to hold a referendum on a new constitution in May this year and elections in 2010. However, if any process is to lead to national reconciliation, all stakeholders must be allowed to participate and political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, must be freed.

### *Burma: Politics and Government*

**21 February: Mr. Carmichael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department plans to make to Burmese authorities on the inclusion of opposition parties and ethnic minorities in the process of drafting a new Burmese constitution planned for May 2008.

**Meg Munn:** The Government have consistently called on the Burmese authorities to include opposition parties and ethnic representatives in the process of drafting a new Burmese constitution. The regime's call for a referendum in May 2008, and elections in 2010, was made without consulting the opposition and ethnic representatives. For the process and any timeline to have credibility and for it to lead to genuine national reconciliation, it must include all political and ethnic groups. On 12 February, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary reiterated our demand that the Burmese regime immediately release Aung San Suu Kyi so that she can participate fully in the drafting of a new constitution. He also called for the immediate return of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Burma, Professor Gambari, to the country to help facilitate the process of inclusive decision making and political transition. We shall continue to press the regime to recognise the need for an inclusive and transparent process. For the road map to lead to a stable, sustainable and peaceful democracy, all interested parties must have faith in its mechanisms.

### *Burma: Education*

**22 February: Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much of his Department's contribution to the multi-donor trust fund for education in Burma has been spent on (a) state schools, (b) monastery schools and (c) other non-state schools since contributions began.

**Mr. Douglas Alexander:** The multi-donor education fund, managed by UNICEF, is designed to help poor Burmese children to complete primary education by helping to cover the costs of schooling which parents would otherwise have to meet themselves. It pays for items such as educational materials and repairs to

school buildings.

In 2007, the first year of its operation, the fund spent £2,880,000. DFID contributed £740,000 of the total. 66 per cent. of the fund (£1,900,000) was spent on local-level support for children in state schools, and 24 per cent. (£700,000) on support for children in monastic and affiliated schools and pre-schools run by NGOs and communities. The remaining 10 per cent. (£280,000) was spent on technical support, including monitoring the distribution and usage of supplies. In the first year 12 per cent. of the primary age population benefited from the work of the fund. In the same period, DFID spent a further £910,000 on support for community-managed pre-schools through Save the Children. None of DFID's funds go to the central Ministry of Education.

### ***Burma: Constitution***

**26 February: Mr. Keith Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his UN Security Council counterparts on the referendum on the constitution in Burma in May 2008; and what role the UN is likely to play in monitoring the conduct of the referendum.

**Dr. Howells:** The UN Security Council has not yet discussed the constitutional referendum announced by the Burmese regime for May 2008. The UN Secretary-General hosted a meeting of the Group of Friends of Burma on 13 February which discussed the announcement. During the meeting, the UK and other members of the Security Council expressed concern that the proposed referendum would not be inclusive or genuine. The Group of Friends pressed for the early return of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Burma, Professor Gambari, to help facilitate national reconciliation and a genuine democratic process. We will continue to work with our partners in the region, and in the Security Council, to bring about genuine progress towards democracy, national reconciliation and respect for human rights in Burma. There are currently no plans for the UN to monitor the elections.  
Burma: Diplomatic Service

**26 February: Mr. Keith Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the EU Special Envoy to Burma; and if he will make a statement.

**Dr. Howells:** My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Meg Munn) met EU Special Envoy for Burma, Piero Fassino, at the margins of the EU/Association of South East Asian Nations summit on 22 November 2007 and hopes to be meeting him again in the near future, to discuss all aspects of the current situation in Burma, including the EU's role in supporting UN efforts to bring about a genuine process of national reconciliation which includes all Burma's opposition and ethnic groups.

### ***Burma: Elections***

**26 February; Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to support democratic elections in Burma.

**Dr. Howells:** The UK has been at the forefront of international efforts to bring about inclusive national reconciliation and the establishment of accountable, civilian government in Burma. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK has maintained the pressure for political change through active UN engagement and ensured that Burma remains on the Security Council's agenda. The UK is also a member of the UN Secretary-General's Group of Friends on Burma, which last met on 13 February. The group discussed the regime's recent call for a referendum in May 2008 and elections in 2010. We stressed the need for the regime to demonstrate fundamental change before there could be international support for the process. The Group of Friends pressed for the early return of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Burma, Professor Gambari, to help facilitate national reconciliation and a genuine democratic process. In the EU, we have played a leading role in securing firm language on the newly announced referendum and election process at the February General Affairs and External Relations Council. The conclusions stated that only a process that involves the full participation of the opposition and ethnic groups will lead to national reconciliation and stability in Burma. The EU reiterated its call for the release of Aung Sang Suu Kyi and other political prisoners.

We keep in close contact with partners in the region, including the Association of South East Asian Nations, to build up constructive pressure on the Burmese government and their continued engagement on the Burma related issues. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has raised Burma with the Chinese and Indians on his recent visits to both countries. My right hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Meg Munn, also reiterated our concerns to the Singaporean Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 18 February.

**Mark Pritchard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will hold discussions with the Government of Burma on the banning of the Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from standing in the 2010 election. [189417]

**Dr. Howells:** We have consistently made clear that only an inclusive process of national reconciliation can bring stability and prosperity to the country. The regime's attempts to exclude Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from the political process are alarming and will exacerbate tension and instability in Burma. In our contacts with the military government, and those who have influence over them, we are stressing the need for all political actors, including Aung San Suu Kyi, to be allowed to play their full part in shaping the country's future.

### ***Burma: Sanctions***

**26 February: Mr. Keith Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on the introduction of financial sanctions against companies associated with Burma's military regime.

**Dr. Howells:** Discussions are ongoing, mainly at senior official level. The EU listed companies with links to the military regime in its new package of measures agreed in October 2007.

EU member states are currently considering further restrictive measures against Burma, including a possible ban on all new investment and the imposition of restrictions on financial measures.

The UK is actively working with our EU partners to ensure a full discussion of further restrictive measures as agreed at the October 2007 General Affairs and External Relations Council.

### ***Burma: Sequestration of Assets***

**26 February: Mr. Keith Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the government of Singapore on the freezing of the financial assets of Burmese leaders held in accounts in that country; and if he will make a statement.

**Dr. Howells:** My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Meg Munn, spoke to the Singaporean Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2(nd) Permanent Private Secretary Bilahari Kausikan, on 18 February to discuss recent developments in Burma. Singapore, both nationally and in its current role as Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) chair, has made clear its concerns about the violent repression carried out by the Burmese authorities last year, its wish to see the regime engaging in genuine dialogue with Burma's opposition parties, and its support for the UN Secretary-General's goodwill mission. But Singapore and its ASEAN partners do not support the application of sanctions at this time. We continue to discuss this and other aspects of the Burma situation with the Singaporean government on a regular basis.

## **LORDS HANSARD DEBATES AND MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

### ***EU: General Affairs and External Relations Council***

**22 February: The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Malloch-Brown):** My honourable friend the Minister for Europe (Jim Murphy) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary (David Miliband) and Kim Darroch (UK Permanent Representative to the EU) represented the UK at the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) in Brussels.

The agenda items covered were as follows:

## Burma

The Government agreed council conclusions underlining that the EU remains deeply concerned by the situation in Burma and urging the authorities to take rapid steps to move to a democratically elected government. The conclusions noted the authorities' announcement on 9 February of a referendum on a new constitution in May 2008 and multi-party elections in 2010.

The Government strongly support the clear message in the conclusions that only a process that involves the full participation of the opposition and ethnic groups will lead to national reconciliation and stability. The conclusions reiterate the EU's call for the release of all political detainees, including Aung San Suu Kyi, the start of a substantial time-bound dialogue with all political stakeholders, and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

### *Indonesia: Human Rights*

**26 February: Lord Malloch-Brown:** The modern Indonesia is one of our great allies in our efforts in Burma. It is a fellow member of the Security Council at the moment, not a small issue in terms of some of the tactical suggestions tonight. It is also, as it happens, a member of the Human Rights Council.

## Council of The European Union

### *BURMA/MYANMAR - Council conclusions*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"1. The European Union remains deeply concerned by the situation in Burma/Myanmar and urges the authorities to take rapid steps to transition to a democratically elected government. The Council notes the authorities' announcement on 9 February of a referendum on a new Constitution in May 2008 and multi-party elections in 2010. It

underlines that only a process that involves the full participation of the opposition and ethnic groups will lead to national reconciliation and stability. To this end the EU reiterates its call for the release of all political detainees, including Aung San Suu Kyi, the start of a substantial time-bound dialogue with all political stakeholders, and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

2. The EU reiterates its full support to the UN Secretary General's good offices mission to help the transition to democracy in Burma/Myanmar, and calls on the authorities to re-admit UN Special Adviser Professor Ibrahim Gambari as soon as possible and to fully cooperate with him and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar Sergio Pinheiro.

3. The EU commends the work of Special Envoy Piero Fassino in co-ordinating the EU's diplomatic efforts with Asian partners, and reaffirms his role in supporting and promoting the UN mission.

4. The EU continues to support the humanitarian needs of the people of Burma/Myanmar and has recently increased aid to that end.

5. The EU remains determined to assist the people of Burma/Myanmar to achieve stability, prosperity and democracy. The EU stands ready to review, amend or reinforce the measures it has already agreed in the light of developments."

## COMMONS SELECT COMMITTEES

### *Select Committee on European Scrutiny Thirteenth Report Restrictive measures against the regime in Burma*

Council Regulation renewing and strengthening current restrictive measures in respect of Burma and repealing Regulation (EC) No. 817/2006

6 February

Legal base Article 15 EU; unanimity

Document originated 15 January 2008

Deposited in Parliament 18 January 2008

Department Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Basis of consideration EM of 1 February 2008

Previous Committee Report None; but see (29083) —: HC 16-ii (2007-08), chapter 21 (14 November 2007)

To be discussed in Council To be determined

Committee's assessment Politically important

Committee's decision Cleared

## Background

9.1 Starting with Common Position 1996/635/CFSP, the EU has adapted and strengthened its sanctions regime against Burma over the last ten years in response to deteriorating circumstances on the ground, failure by the government of Burma to make progress on human rights and national reconciliation, and the use of forced labour. In line with EU sanctions policy the EU has worked to achieve positive change in Burma by placing pressure on those responsible for its policies, whilst minimising any adverse impact on the general population.

9.2 In 2006, the EU again revised its Common Position via CP 2006/340/CFSP, by imposing the following measures:

- a visa ban and assets freeze against named members of the military regime, the military and security forces, the military regime's economic interests and other individuals, groups, undertakings or entities associated with the military regime and their families. A visa ban against serving members of the military of the rank of Brigadier-General and above.
- a comprehensive embargo on arms and equipment that might be used for internal repression and ban on military personnel being attached to diplomatic representations in and from Burma.
- a ban on high-level bilateral government visits at the level of Political Director and above.
- a suspension of most non-humanitarian aid.
- prohibition on EU companies making finance available to, or extension of participation in, named Burmese state-owned companies, their joint ventures and subsidiaries.

9.3 In view of the deterioration of the situation in Burma, the EU adopted Common Position 2007/750/CFSP on 19 November 2007 (which we cleared at our meeting on 14 November 2007). This provided for new restrictive measures concerning certain imports from, exports to and investments in Burma/Myanmar, targeting its timber and extractive industries, which provide sources of revenue for the military regime. It also broadened the scope of the existing restrictions on investment by applying them also in respect of investment in enterprises owned or controlled by persons or entities associated with the military regime, and broadened the categories of persons targeted by the freezing of funds and economic resources.[50]

## The Council Regulation

9.4 The Commission is now proposing a revised Council Regulation to extend current and implement additional restrictive measures against Burma.

9.5 It would extend current restrictive measures which provide sources of revenue for the military regime of Burma/Myanmar in respect of:

- extending and updating persons subject to a travel ban;
- the freezing of their assets; and
- extending and updating the list of enterprises in Burma subject to an investment ban.

9.6 Proposed additional restrictive measures are:

- an export ban on the industrial sectors of logs and timber and defined metals, minerals, precious and semiprecious stones; to include diamonds, rubies, sapphires, jade and emeralds (the Regulation will now include finished products with an exemption for personal items of jewellery);
- an import ban on products from the above mentioned sectors;
- an investment ban on new trade in the above mentioned sectors; and

— the provision of technical assistance or training related to relevant equipment and technology destined for enterprises in the above industries in Burma/Myanmar.

#### The Government's view

9.7 In his 28 January Explanatory Memorandum, the Minister for Europe at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Jim Murphy) recalls that the Council agreed the new restrictive measures in October to increase direct pressure on the Burmese regime following their violent suppression of peaceful protestors as well as the continued human rights abuses in Burma and detention of over 1,100 political prisoners. He continues as follows:

“It is consistent with previous EU policy, given the current political and human rights situation in Burma, to increase pressure on the military regime to enter into a meaningful and genuine dialogue with the democratic opposition. The ultimate aim is the eventual transition to civilian rule and full respect of human rights, including the release of political prisoners and recognition of the rights of ethnic communities. The extension of current measures and the inclusion of additional targeted measures shows that the European Union remains committed to keeping up such pressure. The Government fully supports this approach.”

9.8 We expect this Council Regulation to be approved in February, although no dates have yet been set.

#### Conclusions

9.9 Although we have no questions concerning these proposals, we are reporting them to the House because of the widespread interest in the situation in Burma.

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## LORDS SELECT COMMITTEES

### *European Union Progress of Scrutiny – 5th Report*

#### **7 February**

Council Regulation renewing and strengthening current restrictive measures in respect of Burma and repealing Regulation (EC) No 817/2006 (FCO)

Sifted 5 February 2008 Considered at meeting 7 Feb 08 - Cleared from Scrutiny To write to the Government

### *European Union Progress of Scrutiny – 6th Report*

#### **29 February**

Council Regulation renewing and strengthening current restrictive measures in respect of Burma and repealing Regulation (EC) No 817/2006 (FCO)

Sifted 5 February 2008 Letter to the Government 19 Feb 08 - Cleared from Scrutiny at meeting on 7 Feb 08 Request for further information regarding the EU's sanctions against Burma

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