



LAST MONTH IN PARLIAMENT

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

MAY
2007

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

ETHNIC ISSUES

16 May 2007: Mr. Crabb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations she is making to the government of Burma on the targeting of civilians in Karen State.

Mr. McCartney: We have repeatedly condemned the Burmese army's attacks on civilians in Karen State. I have raised the human rights situation regularly with the Burmese regime and other governments in the region. On 16 June 2006, I called in the Burmese Ambassador and on 5 July 2006 I wrote to the Burmese Foreign Minister, highlighting our many concerns. On 18 September 2006, I raised the serious human rights situation with Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ambassadors, including the Burmese Ambassador, and on 4 December 2006 with the ASEAN Secretary-General. I have also raised Burma with the Governments of China, India, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea. I have discussed the human rights abuses taking place in Burma with Juan Mendez, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. I discussed Burma in detail with Ibrahim Gambari, the UN Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs, on 15 November 2006, following his visit to the country. Most recently, I raised the human rights situation in Burma in my address to the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 13 March and at the EU/ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Nuremberg on 15 March, in the presence of the Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister. In addition, our Ambassador in Rangoon regularly raises human rights with the regime, most recently when he met the Burmese Ministers for Planning and Immigration and the Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister on 5 January. On 23 April the EU Council of Ministers called for the Burmese regime to end the military campaign against civilians in conflict areas. We shall continue to take every opportunity to raise our concerns about all human rights violations in Burma.

16 May 2007 Mr. Crabb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports she has received on the execution of a Karenni humanitarian relief worker, Saw Lee Reh Kyaw, on 10 April. [137075]

Mr. McCartney: We have seen reports about the death of Saw Lee Reh Kyaw, a member of the Free Burma Rangers. Officials from our Embassy in Rangoon do not have access to conflict areas and have not been able to investigate these reports further. I have raised the human rights situation regularly with the Burmese regime and other governments in the region. On 16 June 2006, I called in the Burmese Ambassador and on 5 July 2006 I wrote to the Burmese Foreign Minister, highlighting our many concerns. On 18 September 2006, I raised the serious human rights situation with Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ambassadors, including the Burmese Ambassador, and on 4 December 2006 with the ASEAN Secretary-General. I have also raised Burma with the Governments of China, India, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea. I have discussed the human rights abuses taking place in Burma with Juan Mendez, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. I discussed Burma in detail with Ibrahim Gambari, the UN Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs, on 15 November 2006, following his visit to the country. Most recently, I raised the human rights situation in Burma in my address to the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 13 March and at the EU/ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Nuremberg on 15 March, in the presence of the Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister. In addition, our Ambassador in Rangoon regularly raises human rights with the regime, most recently when he met the Burmese Ministers for Planning and Immigration and the Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister on 5 January.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL

16 May 2007 Mr. Crabb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps she is taking in the UN Security Council to ensure the protection of civilians and relief workers in Burma, in accordance with the Security Council's responsibility to protect. [137118]

Mr. McCartney: We highlighted the impact on civilians of the Burmese Government's campaign against insurgents during the UN Security Council debate on Protection of Civilians on 4 December 2006. We supported the US-led efforts to have Burma added to the UN Security Council agenda in September 2006 and co-sponsored with the US a UN Security Council Resolution on Burma. This was put to the vote on 12 January. Three states voted against and as such the resolution was not adopted. Burma remains on the UN Security Council agenda. We support the UN's efforts, including the good offices mission of the UN Secretary-General, to promote peace and national reconciliation in Burma. We will continue to work closely with the UN and with partners to ensure that this effort is sustained. I have repeatedly raised my concerns about human rights issues with international partners and directly with the Burmese Government. I shall continue to do so.

NUCLEAR

22 May 2007: Mr. Crabb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions she has had with (a) the Russian Ambassador and (b) the Ambassador of Burma on the export of Russian nuclear technology to Burma; and if she will make a statement. [138437]

Mr. McCartney: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has had no discussions with the Russian Ambassador or the Burmese Ambassador about the export of Russian nuclear technology to Burma. We are concerned by recent reports that Russia will be exporting nuclear technology to Burma and will be seeking clarification. Any such export would need to be consistent with both parties' relevant international obligations, including those under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT). The International Atomic Energy Agency would need to be able to verify fulfilment of Burma's obligations under the NPT, through the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement which Burma has signed with the Agency.

REFUGEES

9 May 2007: Lord Hylton asked Her Majesty's Government: Whether they will seek to organise, through the offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or otherwise, education and access to employment for refugees from Burma now in India and Thailand. [HL3480]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Triesman): Our embassies in Bangkok and Rangoon have regular discussions with the UN High Commission for Refugees in Thailand and Burma, and the Government of Thailand, about the welfare of refugees in Thailand. These discussions include access to education and employment. The UN High Commission for Refugees is denied access to Mizoram State and is therefore unable to visit the camps in India. However, we look for opportunities to raise the situation of Burmese refugees in India with the state and central Governments as part of our dialogue with the Government of India on Burma.

FUNDING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

2 May 2007: Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assistance the Government are providing to projects promoting human rights and democracy in Burma.

Mr. Thomas: DFID provides significant support to projects to help the people of Burma access their human rights and build the foundations for sustainable democracy. Our programme includes a wide variety of activities, such as capacity-building for local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), training for journalists, work to involve poor people in decision-making about issues that affect them, and support for the empowerment of poor women. In addition, the British embassy in Rangoon is carrying out extremely valuable work to build local capacity.

DFID is about to start work on the implementation of a £3.0 million programme designed to expand and

strengthen DFID's work to support increased prospects for a successful transition to democracy and respect for human rights in Burma. The programme will increase opportunities for Burma's people to engage in political decision-making processes at the local level affecting their welfare, livelihoods and governance.

AID TO BURMA

24 May 2007: Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much aid was allocated to Burma in (a) 2005-06 and (b) 2006-07, broken down by main budget heading; and what conditions were attached to such aid. [138509]

Mr. Thomas: In 2005-06 DFID aid to Burma was £6.4 million, of which:
£4.5 million was on HIV/AIDS, Communicable Diseases and Basic Health Care;
£0.6 million was for Food Security and Rural Livelihoods;
£1.0 million was for Internally Displaced People and Refugees;
£60,000 was for Democracy and Human Rights.

2006-07 official figures are not yet available, the budget for DFID aid to Burma was £8.0 million, of which:
£4.3 million was on HIV/AIDS, Communicable Diseases and Basic Health Care;
£1.2 million was for Food Security and Rural Livelihoods;
£1.1 million was for Internally Displaced People and Refugees;
£1.4 million was on Education;
£70,000 was for Democracy and Human Rights.

DFID has recently approved a programme of £3 million over three years specifically to support work on democratic change at the local level. The programme will start during 2007-08. The conditions which European Union member states have agreed to apply to their aid is defined by the European Union Common Position, Article 3, which states that:

“Non-humanitarian aid or development programmes shall be suspended. Exceptions shall be made for projects and programmes in support of:

- (a) human rights, democracy, good governance, conflict prevention and building the capacity of civil society;
- (b) health and education, poverty alleviation and in particular the provision of basic needs and livelihoods for the poorest and most vulnerable populations;
- (c) environmental protection and, in particular, programmes addressing the problem of non-sustainable, excessive logging resulting in deforestation.

The projects and programmes should be implemented through UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, and through decentralised cooperation with local civilian administrations. In this context, the European Union will continue to engage with the government of Burma over its responsibility to make greater efforts to attain the UN millennium development goals. Projects and programmes should, as far as possible, be defined, monitored, run and evaluated in consultation with civil society and all democratic groups, including the National League for Democracy.”

EARLY DAY MOTIONS

To view the full list of MPs who have signed these EDMs please visit:
<http://edmi.parliament.uk/edmi/>

EDM 662: VETO OF DRAFT UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON BURMA: Signed by 84 MPs.

EDM 658: RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS, DISCRIMINATION AND PERSECUTION IN BURMA: Signed by 150 MPs.

EDM 498: TARGETED INVESTMENT SANCTIONS AGAINST BURMA'S DICTATORSHIP: Signed by 82 MPs.

EDM 367: UN SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION ON BURMA: Signed by 175 MPs.

DEBATES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

15 May 2007: Debate on Armed Conflict (Parliamentary Approval)

Burma was referred to during the debate:

Dr. Nick Palmer (Broxtowe) (Lab):The background to this debate is the increasing public scepticism over the involvement of Britain in international affairs to anything like the extent to which we have been accustomed in recent years. The right hon. and learned Member for Kensington and Chelsea (Sir Malcolm Rifkind), who spoke earlier, is a vigorous supporter of Britain punching above its weight. There was a recent opinion poll that specifically asked, "Are you in favour of Britain punching above its weight?" A substantial majority said, "No, we are not. We are against Britain getting too much involved." That is a serious issue for all of us.

We can all think of conflicts on which we disagree. For some it might be Suez, for some it might be Iraq, for some it might be a number of conflicts. Similarly, unless we are pacifists, we can all think of occasions when we would like Britain to intervene or to have intervened in the past. Many people feel that we ought to be intervening in Darfur. There are some who feel that we should be intervening in Zimbabwe or in Burma. There is always a debate on these topics and there is always a case for intervention. It is sobering that we have come to a point where the public on the whole say, "I don't care if there is a good case for it. We don't want to get involved." In what we are doing today and in subsequent discussions, we need to try to rebuild the process to the point that the public accept that if that process is gone through in the correct way, we will reach a reasonable basis on which to intervene overseas.

Burma was also referred to in a debate on Sri Lanka:

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cotswold) (Con): ...Sri Lanka has an ancient and historic civilisation, some of which I have explored through ruined cities and buildings such as palaces, dagobars and Buddhist temples throughout the island. I am conscious of the substantial archaeological interest in various sites, including Anuradhapura, Mihintale, Polonnaruwa, Sigirya, Dambulla and Kandy, where the glory of the island's past can be witnessed at first hand.

I have been welcomed by the friendly people of Sri Lanka when I have visited. It is therefore especially sad, given its natural richness, that the troubles and deep divisions persist on that beautiful island. I note that the Minister visited in February. As he said, the problems have been going on for far too long. The dispute in Sri Lanka does not get as much international attention as it deserves when compared with Darfur, Somalia or Burma. That is a travesty, given the long-standing nature of the conflict.

DEBATES IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

On the **10th May** the House of Lords debated modern slavery. Burma was mentioned several times:

Baroness Cox:

.....My second example is from Burma, where the brutal Orwellian-named State Peace and Development Council regime uses different forms of slavery and servitude in its assaults against its own people, especially against the ethnic national groups such as the Karen, Karenni, Shan, Chin, Rohingya, Mon and Kachin peoples. These include systematic sexual slavery, forced labour in conditions so harsh that many perish, the use of human minesweepers, and the highest number of child soldiers in the world—70,000.

During numerous visits to Shan, Karen, Karenni and Chin people, we have heard countless personal accounts of the brutality of forced labour, sexual abuse as a weapon of war, and the use of villagers as human minesweepers. One lady described how her husband had repeatedly been forced to work as a porter until he was compelled to walk in front of SPDC soldiers as a human minesweeper and was blown up. Subsequently, she had to become a porter, carrying 30 kilograms of rice or ammunition for the soldiers from dawn to dusk. At night, she and other women porters were systematically sexually abused. Her son was also beaten and suffers permanent brain damage.

There are many well documented reports providing massive evidence of the SPDC regime's use of different forms of slavery, such as Catwalk to the Barracks by the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, or the abuse of children as child soldiers as documented in the report My Gun was as Tall as Me by Human Rights Watch.

Lord Dholakia:

....The same resolve applies to the problem of forced labour imposed by the state. Although states are responsible for a much smaller percentage of forced labour, certain Governments, such as that of Burma, are directly responsible for this form of slavery. Governments are far more difficult to prosecute than guilty individuals, especially when there is little or no legislation against the act. For the eradication of contemporary slavery to be possible, there need to be highly prioritised national and global action plans; but, before even that is possible, total acceptance of the situation of modern slavery is necessary. Trafficking in human beings is one such example. Many of the world's Governments seem to have their eyes closed to the culpable practices either in their own countries or in the world around them.

Lord Roberts of Llandudno:

...My Lords, I join in the thanks to the noble Baroness, Lady Howells, for the opportunity again to discuss this vital subject. The debate has brought together many different strands of experience. I was amazed at the historical knowledge and the memory of some of those who spoke. How they remembered the whole history of slavery is beyond me. It was a remarkable tour de force. We have heard how slavery was accepted as a normal fact of life. Many centuries ago some were born to slavery, others to freedom. The noble Baroness, Lady Hooper, told us that we should never forget, that we must remember.

The definition of a slave has been given to me as, first, one who is forced to work through mental or physical threat; secondly, one who is owned or controlled by an employer; and, thirdly, one who is dehumanised as a commodity, or bought or sold as property, one who is physically constrained or has had restrictions placed on his freedom of movement. A slave is someone who has lost his right over his own life—and that happened, of course—a chattel to be dispensed with, who could be killed at the whim of the slave owner. Then came the battles of Clarkson, Wilberforce, Equiano, Lincoln and so many others. In their victory, we thought that the battle had been won, that slavery, this evil, was destroyed once and for all. We have been reminded how this evil trade still exists in Burma, north Uganda and other places. Slavery continues today.

On **24 May 2007** a debate was held about Burma and the Karen:

Baroness Cox asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will make representations to the Government of Burma with regard to continuing offensives and threats of further offensives against the Karen people inside Karen state and in camps for the displaced in Thailand.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Triesman):

My Lords, the United Kingdom has been in the forefront of international efforts to highlight human rights abuses, including the attacks on civilians in conflict areas. On 23 April, European Union Foreign Ministers issued a statement calling for an end to the military campaign. We intend to set out our concerns directly to the Burmese Foreign Minister at the Asia-Europe meeting of Foreign Ministers in Hamburg next week.

My Lords, I thank the Minister for that encouraging and sympathetic response. Is he aware that, in the past year alone, 27,000 civilians in Karen state and a further 59,000 in other states in eastern Burma have been displaced from their villages by SPDC military offensives and are now hiding in the jungle, living and dying in appalling conditions as internally displaced peoples? Will Her Majesty's Government consider taking further initiatives to instigate proceedings to bring the SPDC regime to account for crimes against humanity?

Lord Triesman: My Lords, we will consider any new initiatives, including those that the noble Baroness has just identified, that would help us to promote reform and positive change and bring an end to human rights abuses. This is a continuing crisis for the civilians who were caught up in recent fighting between rival armed ethnic groups, which has added to the alarming number of displaced people already affected by the offensives of the Burmese army. The Government give £1.8 million to the Thailand Burma Border Consortium, which provides humanitarian aid to internally displaced people and refugees, and we are spending £8 million per annum in Burma on fighting HIV, TB and malaria. We need a comprehensive policy across these fronts.

Lord Howell of Guildford: My Lords, the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, is right to keep bringing this issue before us. Are there not 7 million Karen people in Burma, and another 400,000 in Thailand, and have they not been subjected steadily to the most appalling atrocities, being rounded up, shot down and slaughtered

in manners reminiscent of the Nazi era? Are not 40 per cent of them Christians? Are they not a people to whom we in Britain owe a considerable debt, since they supported us against our enemies during the Second World War? Will the Minister assure us that their plight and our efforts to carry on with the initiatives that he described are continually to the forefront in his department and in government policy? We need to maintain our reputation for looking after our friends in the world—a reputation that is unfortunately in tatters in other parts of the world at the moment.

Lord Triesman: My Lords, I do not accept the last element of what the noble Lord said, but I completely agree with the rest. This is an obligation on us, and we will continue to meet it. It is a matter that has engaged us as Ministers in making representations. We should not cease to take the opportunities that we have. We are talking about a terrible regime, although I add, without by any means trying to mitigate the terror that it inflicts, that inter-ethnic fighting is making the whole problem worse.

Lord Avebury: My Lords, I congratulate the Government on the measures that they have taken to persuade the Government of Burma to live up to their requirements, but is not the problem that ASEAN members have not joined in? At their recent meeting in Manila, the question of Burma was not even on the agenda. While I congratulate the Government of Thailand on playing host to the large number of refugees mentioned by the Minister, would it not bring home to ASEAN its responsibilities if UNHCR apportioned the costs of supporting these refugees to the neighbouring states and sent them a bill?

Lord Triesman: My Lords, I am not sure that the United Nations has a mechanism for increasing the charges to particular groups of countries, but I am completely at one with the noble Lord about the responsibilities of ASEAN. That is one of the reasons why my right honourable friend Ian McCartney, I and others have made representations to those nations, bilaterally and to them as a group. I am glad to say that the European Union has been doing so, too, in relation to them as a group. It is without question a scar on ASEAN's performance.

Lord Clarke of Hampstead: My Lords, the Minister referred in his initial Answer to a number of initiatives. Will he consider providing support and assistance, and funding if necessary, for an international independent inquiry into what is going on and the violation of human rights? I consider what is going on to be a form of genocide, which should be a matter for investigation by an international inquiry, too.

Lord Triesman: My Lords, I can confirm that discussions about what form of crime against humanity this is are proceeding in the international fora. My priority would be to ensure that Ibrahim Gambari, who represented the previous Secretary-General in Burma in November of last year, resumes his efforts now that he has been reappointed by Ban Ki-Moon. It may be that an inquiry should come along in due course, but I am eager to see the most senior people in the United Nations directly involved in trying to find a solution in Burma. It would be well worth our adding our weight to that effort.

Lord Alton of Liverpool: My Lords, is the Minister aware that Sunday will be the 17th anniversary of the 1990 elections in Burma, when the National League for Democracy won more than 80 per cent of the seats? It will also be the day, one year on, when the extension of the house arrest order on Aung San Suu Kyi will expire. Will he take this opportunity to support the statement made recently by the noble Baroness, Lady Thatcher, and other former heads of government, calling for her release? Will he also tell us why the European Union common position was not recently strengthened when this matter was discussed, including the points made by the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, about the plight of the Karen people?

Lord Triesman: My Lords, I do not think that there is any question about the level of support in the European Union. I appreciate the efforts being made by the noble Baroness, Lady Thatcher. However, rather than speaking for her—she has never needed us to do that at any time in her history—perhaps I can say on behalf of the Government that I unreservedly condemn the detention of the democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. I sincerely hope that her house arrest will not be extended this weekend. That point will be made to the Burmese Government. She should be released, as should all other political prisoners. The Burmese Government will be in no doubt of our position as this unfortunate anniversary comes up.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO AID TO BURMA

This Committee is currently holding an inquiry into aid to Burma. To view evidence submitted to the International Development Committee as part of its inquiry into British Aid to Burma, please visit the following link:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmintdev/ucburma/ucburma01.htm>

HOUSE OF LORDS ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO SANCTIONS

On the 9th May 2007 the Lords Economic Affairs Committee published a report on the impact of economic sanctions, in which it criticised the effectiveness of sanctions against Burma. Bizarrely, the Committee did not approach any organisations or academics with any knowledge or expertise on sanctions against Burma to provide them with evidence. The result was a report riddled with inaccuracies and based largely on evidence of one biased former investor in the country. The Burma Campaign UK has written to the Committee to point out the many inaccuracies and express concern that the Committee would make judgements and pronouncements on an issue of which they clearly have no knowledge. The Committee has not responded. The press release for the report follows:

Embargo: 00:01 Wednesday 9 May 2007

Contact: Owen Williams 020 7219 8659

SANCTIONS NOT THE WAY TO RESOLVE DISPUTES WITH IRAN AND N.KOREA – LORDS COMMITTEE SLAM UK'S USE OF SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAQ AND BURMA

The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee have today criticised the UK's use of economic sanctions and stated that sanctions should not be relied upon to resolve ongoing disputes with Iran and North Korea.

The criticisms, which come in the Committee's report *The Impact of Economic Sanctions*, make clear that previous attempts by the UK and America to apply economic sanctions against other countries have backfired. The Committee state that sanctions used in isolation from other forms of diplomatic pressure are unlikely to force major policy change and may even be counterproductive.

The Committee highlight the cases of sanctions used against Iraq and Burma.

Iraq – Comprehensive UN sanctions

The sanctions against Iraq had a major economic impact and generally weakened the regime. However, the threat of potential invasion and the continuation of targeted bombing in the 1990's were also important factors in Iraq's disarmament.

The Committee stress the immense human cost of sanctions in Iraq. The use of comprehensive sanctions forced the population to rely on food rations distributed by the government. The Committee say this not only caused terrible hardship for the population but actually strengthened the regime in terms of domestic control by giving it a new instrument of political pressure and control.

Burma – Targeted and general EU sanctions

The Committee criticise the UK's use of sanctions against Burma. They argue that the policy of discouraging trade, investment and tourism hits the economy generally and harms ordinary Burmese people and so can not accurately be described as targeted sanctions.

Sanctions against Burma have achieved no progress towards democratisation or respect for human rights there. And neither the UK Government nor the EU, while both desire democratic change, expect the current sanctions to bring this about. Sanctions are instead used to demonstrate disapproval of the regime. The Committee points out that this directly contradicts the Government's principle that sanctions should have "clear objectives, including well defined and realistic demands against which compliance can be judged, and a clear exit strategy."

The Committee recommend that the Government undertake an urgent assessment of the effects of

sanctions against Burma, as they may be causing significant hardship to the Burmese people, without clear goals or ways of measuring the impact on the targeted regime.

General Sanctions Policy

The Committee recommend that the operation of sanctions is now examined more rigorously. They argue that comprehensive sanctions hurt the population of the affected country more than the targeted regime; they doubt humanitarian exemptions can correct this.

The Committee also argue that the Government should now ensure that any sanctions it is involved in are subject to the UN's humanitarian assessment procedures. The results of this assessment should be made public, as should the objectives the sanctions are intended to achieve. The Committee also call for a regular Parliamentary review of sanctions so that MPs and Peers can consider whether sanctions are achieving their intended goals.

North Korea and Iran

The Committee cast doubt on the effectiveness of sanctions against North Korea in persuading it to abandon its nuclear weapons programme. They point out that North Korea's plutonium facilities, which had been frozen, were unfrozen and mobilised following the introduction of American sanctions by President Bush.

The Committee endorse the Government's support for a package of measures for North Korea, including the phasing out of sanctions, in return for it renouncing nuclear weapons. They state that, however distasteful the regime, such a deal is preferable to the dangers of a nuclear-armed confrontation.

On Iran, the Committee support the EU's Framework Agreement and its incentive rather than sanction-based approach. They argue its only weakness is the lack of US support and urge the Government to make every effort to secure US backing.

The Committee conclude by stating that reliance on economic sanctions to resolve the disputes with Iran and North Korea would be a recipe for failure. They argue for a pragmatic approach combining a lifting of sanctions, economic incentives, diplomatic recognition and security guarantees in return for verifiable reciprocal steps from North Korea and Iran.

Commenting Lord Wakeham, Chairman of the Committee, said:

"It is clear that economic sanctions used in isolation are unlikely to work.

"Sanctions can have a major economic impact. However, the effect of poorly targeted sanctions can often be to strengthen the position of the regime in power as they assume closer control over the national resources diminished by the sanctions. This was the case in Iraq in the early 1990's and the effect was disastrous for the Iraqi people.

"Even so-called 'targeted' sanctions have been relatively ineffective. The Government must now look again at all sanctions in which it is involved to ensure they are achieving their aims. It is important Parliament is involved in this process to provide adequate scrutiny of how sanction regimes are performing.

"Our report has made clear that economic sanctions cannot be relied on in the ongoing disputes with Iran and North Korea. We need a more sophisticated approach that combines carrot and stick. The EU's framework agreement on Iran provides a model for this and the British Government should use its influence to persuade America to give the initiative its support."

Notes to Editors 1. The report is published by The Stationery Office, The Impact of Economic Sanctions, House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, 2nd report of 2006/07, HL paper 96-I.

2. The full report will be available shortly after publication at:

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/lords_economic_affairs.cfm

3. The members of the Committee who conducted the inquiry are: Lord Wakeham (Chairman), Lord Oakeshott of Seagrove Bay, Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach, Lord Paul, Lord Kingsdown, Lord Sheldon, Lord Lamont of Lerwick, Lord Skidelsky, Lord Lawson of Blaby, Lord Turner of Ecchinswell, Lord Layard, Lord Vallance of Tummel, Lord Macdonald of Tradeston

BRITISH GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS ON BURMA

The Burma Campaign UK has long been critical of the British Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister for failing to discuss Burma with their counterparts in Asia. We were, therefore, very pleased that during a recent speech during a trip to China Margaret Beckett referred to China playing a role in pushing for change in Burma. It is not known, however, if she raised Burma during private discussions with Chinese government officials. The excerpt from the speech follows:

17 May 2007 Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett

“Good afternoon, Here at the Central Party School you have many of the thinkers and innovators of today’s China and, no doubt, more than a few leaders of tomorrow’s China: a country that is the fastest growing political and economic power in the world. That makes this a rare and special audience indeed: you will play a pivotal part in rising to the challenge I want to talk about today: how, together, we can build a harmonious world: a world in which the globalisation of opportunity, which offers so many benefits, is matched by the globalisation of responsibility to ensure those benefits are shared.

China’s role here in the Asia-Pacific region has been increasingly active and increasingly positive. The UK warmly welcomes the improvement in relations between China and Japan - so vital to the region, and indeed to our own interests. China has played a key role in the Six Party Talks with North Korea. I hope that China can bring that same influence to bear on the regime in Burma. The call on China to show such leadership will only get stronger.”

26 May 2007

BECKETT CONDEMNS EXTENSION OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI’S HOUSE ARREST

‘One year ago I condemned the Burmese Government’s decision to extend the house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. It saddens me deeply to learn that the Burmese regime has extended her detention by yet another year. She has now spent more than eleven of the last 17 years in detention, and will next month spend her 62nd birthday in captivity. The Burmese Government has insisted that it intends to restore democracy to Burma. But we cannot have any faith in their promises while Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 1100 other prisoners are held for nothing more than expressing their desire to bring freedom and democracy to Burma. While I can call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi without fear of reprisal, it is shocking to think that 38 people in Burma were arrested recently simply for making that same call. ‘I call again for the Burmese Government to listen to the repeated urging of the international community, and above all the call of its own people, to restore democracy to Burma and, as a first step, demonstrate its stated commitment by releasing all political prisoners.’

28 May 2007

McCARTNEY: ASEM FOREIGN MINISTERS’ MEETING

Ian McCartney, Minister for Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs, has arrived in Hamburg to attend the 8th Asia Europe (ASEM) Foreign Ministers’ Meeting.

Some 40 ministerial delegations, spanning Europe and Asia will travel to Germany for this event. In its new enlarged format ASEM countries now represent around 58% of the earth’s population, 50% of global GDP and 60% of the world’s trade.

Speaking from Hamburg today, Mr McCartney commented:

‘I am delighted to be representing the UK at ASEM today. This meeting will be the first gathering of ASEM Foreign Ministers under its new enlarged format, which now incorporates all 27 Member States and practically the whole of Asia.

'I will take this opportunity to encourage further co-operation between Asia and Europe on challenges of global importance, including Climate Change, Counter Terrorism, Afghanistan and the Middle East Peace Process.

'I will also take this opportunity to raise the UK's increasing concerns about Burma. I shall be calling on the Burmese government to make tangible progress on the transition towards democracy, to end the human rights violations and to release all political prisoners immediately.

'I condemn the Burmese government's decision to extend the house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi and call for her immediate release. The regime's stated aim of restoring democracy to Burma is disingenuous whilst political leaders are being denied the opportunity to take part in the process.

'It is vital that our partners in Asia and Europe to keep up the pressure for change in Burma. I hope that ASEM can use this meeting to discuss how Asia and Europe can work together to improve the situation in Burma.'

Notes for Editors:

More information about ASEM can be viewed at: www.aseminfoboard.org

**Published by The Burma Campaign UK, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT
www.burmacampaign.org.uk tel: 020 7324 4710 fax: +44 20 7324 4717**



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