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**GUY RYDER**  
GENERAL SECRETARY  
SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL  
GENERALSEKRETÄR  
SECRETARIO GENERAL

Address

GS/km

10 October 2007

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Business Links with Burma**

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) understands that your company has, or has in the recent past had, business links with Burma. The recent violent repression of Burmese people calling for democracy and fundamental rights, with ongoing detention of large numbers of people and the use of torture and other means of intimidation, underlines once again the appallingly vicious nature of the military junta which controls the country and which tolerates no dissent. It is a matter of fact that the real beneficiaries of foreign business links with Burma are the members of the junta itself and their small coterie of supporters, while the people of Burma are suffering increasingly severe economic hardship. The growth in the number of foreign business links in recent years has done nothing at all to ease the suffering of the people – rather, it has served to strengthen the regime’s grip on the economy and all other aspects of life.

The ITUC supports its associated organisation in Burma, the Federation of Trade Unions – Burma (FTUB) and the country’s democracy movement in calling on all foreign businesses to sever their links with Burma as a matter of urgency. We therefore call upon you to join those businesses which have in recent times taken the correct and principled decision to end all business activities in or with Burma.

Our campaign, which dates back to the year 2000, is based in legal terms on a Resolution adopted in June of that year by the Annual Conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the UN agency specialised in social matters. That Resolution came after the junta had ignored, for two years, recommendations of a special Commission of Inquiry into forced labour practices which are imposed by Burma’s military regime. The Resolution, which constituted an unprecedented step in the ILO’s then 81-year history, recommended that “the Organisation’s Constituents as a whole – governments, employers and workers – review, in the light of the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry, the relations that they may have with [Burma] and take appropriate measures to ensure that [Burma] cannot take advantage of such relations to perpetuate or extend the system of forced or compulsory labour (...)”. Even if a particular business arrangement does not make direct use of forced labour, the support which the junta derives from any foreign business relation helps to perpetuate its forced labour system.

Ever since this Resolution was adopted, the international trade union movement has called on all companies having business links with Burma to withdraw from that country and sever economic links with it. This stems from the undisputable fact that there can be no business activity in Burma which does not contribute to financing the ruling military junta. In 1998, the ILO Commission of Inquiry charged with examining the junta's appalling forced labour practices, established conclusively that forced labour was imposed on the civilian population on a vast scale, was widespread and "systemic" and was accompanied by massive violations of other human rights, including arbitrary detention, torture, executions, rape and many others. The Commission of Inquiry also determined that, as it was practised in Burma, forced labour constituted a crime against humanity and that those responsible were engaging their own individual responsibility under international criminal law.

In fact, legal procedures invoking that very principle have already been launched in certain countries against some multinational companies with a Burma presence or investment.

The ITUC and its Global Unions partner organisations are maintaining a public database of companies which have or are believed to have business links with Burma and will continue to use this in support of our work to convince business to end such links. You may in fact have in recent years received correspondence similar to this. If so, our evidence would suggest that you have nevertheless chosen to maintain your company's business links with, or presence in, Burma and we are writing you once again to urge you to reconsider that position, particularly in the light of the most recent events there. The ITUC is working closely with our national affiliates and Global Unions partners around the world on this issue, and you may also receive further approaches from trade union organisations in support of our call for withdrawal from Burma.

In the event that your company has no business links with Burma, please provide us with the necessary information in order to enable us to remove your company from the database.

We look forward to receiving your reply, and request that you do so by 31 October 2007 at the latest.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Guy Ryde". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

General Secretary