



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESSE 293

**Declaration by the High Representative Catherine Ashton
on behalf of the European Union
on the elections in Burma/Myanmar**

1. Today, the first elections were held in Burma/Myanmar, since those of 1990 whose results were never implemented.
2. Elections in themselves do not make a country democratic; nevertheless they should offer the opportunity for a new beginning and greater pluralism. The EU regrets therefore that the authorities did not take the necessary steps to ensure a free, fair and inclusive electoral process. Many aspects of these elections are not compatible with internationally accepted standards; notably in the bias against most opposition parties - such as the NLD - and their candidates, in terms of opportunities to campaign; in restrictions on their registration; in severe restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly; in limited access to the media; and in the lack of free and balanced reporting by the latter.
3. In this context, the EU repeats its call for the unconditional release of all those detained for their political convictions. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest on entirely spurious grounds. The EU calls on the government to restore her unrestricted freedom.
4. However, the EU notes the fact that civil society could partially organise itself politically, notwithstanding the many difficulties. The EU acknowledges the decision of those opposition parties who have chosen not to participate because of the flawed process. The EU equally acknowledges the fact that other parties, including from ethnic groups, did participate, hoping that this could represent an opportunity for change.

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5. The EU calls on the authorities to ensure that these elections mark the start of a more inclusive phase, by allowing in particular representatives of all groups to participate in the political life of the country, and by releasing all political detainees. A meaningful dialogue between all stakeholders is long overdue. Such a dialogue should usher in a transition to a civilian, legitimate and accountable system of government, based on the rule of law; to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and to the participation of all strata of society in the economic and social development of the country. We stand ready to support such a process.

6. The EU will observe closely how accountable the new Parliament and government will be vis-à-vis the electorate; whether the new institutions will ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and contribute to a process leading towards reconciliation and democracy; and whether they will deliver better policies to improve the economic and social situation of citizens.

7. The EU recalls the Council conclusions of 26 April 2010, and its unwavering commitment to the people of Burma/Myanmar. The EU will continue to work to increase their well-being.
