



UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

United Nations Special Rapporteurs urge the Myanmar authorities to immediately release peaceful protesters

Geneva, 13 September 2007: The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Ambeyi Ligabo, and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Leandro Despouy, call on the authorities of Myanmar to immediately release the peaceful protestors who have been detained following demonstrations against the unprecedented increase in the prices of fuel.

The Special Rapporteurs recall that the brutal arrests of more than 150 people since the beginning of the protests, on 19 August 2007, are in violation of international recognized human rights standards and should not be tolerated by the international community. It is shocking that peaceful demonstrators have received life sentences in trials without any basic guarantee of the due process of law and that local journalists were prevented from reporting on these measures.

The Special Rapporteurs are aware of the important and courageous role played by women, student leaders and monks in these peaceful protests. The Myanmar authorities should be proud of its vibrant civil society and engage without hesitations in a constructive and transparent dialogue with all parties so as to lay down a road map for a healthy and empowered democratic society, for the benefit of the country and the region at large. There will be no progress in Myanmar's political transition unless ordinary people have space to express their views and discontent, peacefully and in public.

The Special Rapporteurs note that Myanmar and the international community have a responsibility to safeguard the universal right to freedom of expression and association and urge States in the region to assist the government of Myanmar in upholding the principles of democracy and rule of law. They recall that when the situation in Myanmar was discussed at the United Nations Security Council earlier this year, several members urged parallel action at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The Special Rapporteurs consequently urge members of the Human Rights Council to press the authorities of Myanmar for the immediate and unconditional release of the detainees and political prisoners and a relaxation of the current situation.