

Statement by the Ethnic Community Development Forum

June 17, 2008

World Bank and ADB cautioned against increasing engagement with Burma's military regime following post-Nargis assessment

We understand that the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have sent staff to join the ASEAN post-Nargis joint assessment that is currently taking place in Burma. We also understand that the assessment team will present a preliminary report in late June and a final report in mid-July 2008.

We are concerned that the World Bank and the ADB may view the humanitarian crisis in Burma as an opportunity to increase engagement with Burma's military regime, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Until a genuinely democratic government is installed in Burma, the World Bank and the ADB should focus only on facilitating humanitarian relief efforts. In addition, SPDC should be obliged to use its foreign reserves to supplement external funding for relief efforts.

As stakeholders in Burma's future, we insist that the World Bank and the ADB include the undersigned and other community-based organizations which are advocating for genuine political reform, in any decision-making process regarding their activities in Burma. As organizations with a broad range of contacts within Burma, we are well-informed about the situation in ethnic areas, and are able to communicate the requests and concerns that those inside Burma cannot express for security reasons.

We further insist that the details of the World Bank's and the ADB's activities in Burma, including any assessment missions and details of support to the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force, be made public so that they may be reviewed widely by us and all other stakeholders in Burma's recovery.

Ethnic Community Development Forum, together with

1. Burma River Network
2. Kachin Women's Association - Thailand
3. Karen Environment and Social Action Network
4. Nationalities Youth Forum
5. Salween Watch Coalition
6. Shan Women's Action Network
7. Shan Youth Power

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The Ethnic Community Development Forum (ECDF), comprising seven community development organisations from Burma, promotes grassroots, participatory and sustainable development.