

Statement of the Pa'O Peoples Liberation Organisation (PPLO) / Pa'O Peoples Liberation Army (PPLA) at the occasion of signing the *Deed of Commitment Under Geneva Call for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action* in Geneva on the 16th of April 2007

Respective Chairperson and members of Geneva Call, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Hkun Okker and I joined the nationalist resistance movement in 1972. In my 35 years experience in the resistance, I have seen many landmine victims. It is always brings me great sorrow. Even I can not express my feelings in words.

Today is a very important day in respect to Burma's humanitarian history after half a century of facing a severe humanitarian crisis all over the country.

Landmine use is extremely dangerous, not only for all personnel engaged in the violent conflict, but also for the innocent local civilians (villagers) in the conflict areas. We have a saying in our army, "Landmines never recognise its owners." Most of the victims were the ones who laid the mines themselves.

So, when Geneva Call gave a call to the National Democratic Front (NDF) and its member organisations, as General Secretary I immediately responded by convening an emergency Executive Committee meeting to decide upon landmine use. At this meeting, the NDF came up with a common position on the issue. We three organisations, the Pa'O, Palaung and Lahu are here today to give our group's commitment to ban anti-personnel landmines by signing the Deed of Commitment in front of all of you.

The PPLA, the armed wing of the PPLO, has ceased all military activity including landmine use. Even if the situation changes, and the PPLA needs to resume military activities, we can assure you that the use of landmines will remain banned. Our PPLO and PPLA are making an unconditional commitment by signing here in Geneva to terminate all landmine use now and forever.

In conclusion, we are very grateful to Geneva Call for:

1. Recognising our small groups as having a role to play and approaching us on this important issue;
2. Showing the way for our own good to save our party members as well as our populations in the conflict areas from landmines; and,
3. Making known our sufferings via this well organised signing ceremony here in Geneva.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Hkun Okker
Chairperson
PPLO

16 April 2007
Geneva