

Union Day message to the people

From the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA)

On the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Union of Myanmar

On this auspicious occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Union of Myanmar, RCSS/SSA wishes all the people of all the constituent States and Regions of the Union a success in their efforts to build and enjoy peace and a Federal Union with all of its essential characteristics.

Seventy years ago, at this time, leaders from the would-be constituent States of the current Union, and representatives of the people, met at Panglong town to strive to forge unification between the Hills (or Frontier Areas) and the Burma Proper (or Ministerial Burma) so that they could gain independence from the British together at the same time, and form an historically first ever Federal Union. The results of the meeting, the 1947 Panglong Conference, were the Panglong Agreement and several other solemn promises, which later led to independence and the forming of the Union as you have already known.

The most salient points among the promises and agreements reached during the course of Panglong Agreement are: To establish a genuine federal union based on the principle of equality; the autonomy in internal administration already enjoyed by any portion of the Frontier Areas would not be deprived of in any manner; citizens of the Hills shall enjoy rights and privileges which are regarded as fundamental in democratic countries; the arrangements in the Agreement are without prejudice to the financial autonomy vested in the Federated Shan States; which are sincerely stipulated in points 5, 7 and 8 of the Agreement.

However, since the promised federal union of equality could not be successfully established, even more than (10) years after independence, a conference to amend the constitution was held in 1961 in Taunggyi and the result of the conference, known as Shan Federal Proposal, which contains principles of genuine federalism, was later presented in the Constituent Assembly. This Proposal was one-sidedly accused of being an attempt to secede and forcibly suppressed, prompting the Hill Peoples of the constituent States to take up arms to revolt against the injustice.

Because of the conflicts following the destruction of the Panglong Agreement and broken promises, peace has been lost and a civil war has dragged on for more than (70) years in the country. In retrospect, this is because of the lack of opportunity in the past to address political issues through political means.

Federalism is a system based on the willingness of the component parts to unify, and designed to enable them to live peacefully together in accordance with the principles of equality and the right of self-determination, with mechanisms for mutual checks and balances. It is designed, not for powerful or majority people, but to protect the rights of the weaker or minority people. It provides ways in which to guarantee the right to equality of diverse peoples, enabling them to live together peacefully in unity with diversity.

At present, the Government of the Union of Myanmar and the Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) have been able to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on 15 October 2015, and thus opening up the door for political negotiations, and further designating the results of the future political dialogues to be the foundation on which the Federal Union is to be implemented.

RCSS regards itself only as a bridge that paves the way towards peace. The tasks to indentify the basic principles essentially necessary for the Union and to bring about national reconciliation are in the hands of the people who are the original owner of the Union.

In the future political dialogues, ethnic nationalities and the people of the respective constituent States and Regions should strive to achieve their federal rights with the spirit of justice and equality, and the RCSS hereby pledges to follow suit and join hands with the people.

Central Committee

Restoration Council of Shan State

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