

ASEAN and Myanmar – Rising to the Occasion

This weekend, members of ASEAN will meet in Jakarta for an extraordinary summit on the situation in Myanmar. The people of Myanmar and the region, and indeed the whole international community, will be following discussions in Jakarta closely, hoping that ASEAN leaders agree on concrete steps to put the country back on the road to peace and democracy.

As violence against citizens in Myanmar continues, the country plummets into economic chaos, and the risk of civic conflict increases, Club de Madrid and the Kofi Annan Foundation call on regional leaders to act decisively.

Events in Myanmar have dramatically jeopardised the country's nascent democracy but they also threaten regional peace and security. They risk undermining ASEAN's standing and its commitment to peace if it does not step up while a member state descends into anarchy. Extraordinary circumstances call for extraordinary measures.

The very fact that ASEAN is holding the summit and considering the appointment of a Special Envoy, the first in the organisation's history, should make it clear to the Tatmadaw what for many is now evident – the coup has failed.

A Special Envoy can play a decisive role in solving the crisis. But he/she must be equipped with a robust mandate that prioritizes an immediate halt to violence against civilians and the release of those arbitrarily arrested since February 1 - including President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. It must also chart a quick return to civilian rule and the restoration of the democratically elected Parliament, and include facilitating desperately needed humanitarian relief. The Envoy must be empowered to consult widely – most critically with the National Unity Government, armed ethnic groups, the Civil Disobedience Movement and other actors in Myanmar.

ASEAN member states need to remain firmly united. Any division would preclude a successful outcome, and would be exploited by those who want to prevent it. Equally important is the need for other international actors to support ASEAN fully and make it clear that the international community speaks with one voice on Myanmar, be it through the UN Security Council or the General Assembly.

ASEAN has a unique opportunity to demonstrate its adherence “to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance, respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms” enshrined in its Charter. It can show leadership in promoting stability in the region and the wellbeing of all its citizens. We call on its leaders to rise to the occasion and endorse their historic responsibility. Failure to do so could be disastrous, not only for the people of Myanmar but for the entire region.



Danilo Türk
President of Club de Madrid
President of Slovenia (2007-2012)



Elhadj As Sy
Chair of the Board