



Department of Trade and Industry

Our reference : 29820

Caroline Lucas MEP
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**Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office**

London SW1A 2AH

*From The Minister of State for
Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs*

17 July 2006

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your letter of 9 May to Margaret Beckett about the EU Common Position on Burma. I am replying as Minister responsible for our relations with Burma. I apologise for the severe delay in replying, which was due to an administrative error.

You asked about strengthening the EU's punitive measures against the Burmese regime. Despite the range of views within the EU on whether sanctions or engagement is the appropriate policy to pursue with Burma, the UK has worked hard to get the strongest possible measures in the EU Common Position on Burma, which was renewed for a further year in April 2006. The Common Position sets out a number of measures including an arms embargo; bans on defence links; high-level bilateral government visits; most non-humanitarian aid; the supply of equipment that might be used for internal repression and an asset freeze and visa ban on regime members, their families, the military and security forces. The decision process to decide these measures is based on unanimity. We believe the EU Common Position sends a clear signal to the regime that all EU partners share grave concerns about the situation in Burma and that we will continue to press strongly for progress towards national reconciliation and respect for human rights.

You urge the Government to ensure that the UK continues to raise the situation in Burma with the international community and with the regime.

We fully support all international action, including in the UN Security Council, which would help to promote reform and positive change in Burma. We are therefore supporting the US proposal for a Security Council Resolution on Burma. We are working closely with the US and other partners in the Council to ensure there is a full debate on Burma, which we hope will lead to a Resolution. We would want such a Resolution or other Security Council outcome to highlight international concerns over flagrant human rights abuses inside the country and to call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners. We would also want the Council to demonstrate the broadest possible support for the efforts of the UN to move Burma towards an all-inclusive democracy, sustainable development and true national reconciliation.

At the European Union General Affairs and External Relations Council on 12 June, the Dutch Foreign Minister proposed that the EU lend its support to the US proposal for a UN Security Council Resolution on Burma. All EU Member States represented on the Security Council have given their full support to this.



We have been at the forefront of international efforts over many years to bring pressure to bear on the military regime to re-establish democracy and to respect human rights. We take every opportunity to raise human rights issues with the regime. On 15 June I summoned the Burmese Ambassador and on 5 July I wrote to the Burmese Foreign Minister, raising our concerns about the large-scale abuses of ethnic groups, forced labour, restrictions to religious freedom, the use of sexual violence and the exploitation of children (I attach a copy of this letter). I reiterated our call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and that of all other political prisoners held in Burma. The Prime Minister also expressed his bitter disappointment about the continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi in a statement marking her 61st birthday on 19 June.

APPROVED BY THE MINISTER, AND SIGNED IN
HIS ABSENCE
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The Rt Hon Ian McCartney
Minister for Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs