Women’s organizations and networks of Myanmar/Burma statement on International Women’s Day, with the theme of “Choose to Challenge Dictatorship”
March 8, 2021

March 8th has been recognized and commemorated as International Women’s Day for over 110 years. The purpose of celebrating International Women’s Day is to recognize and congratulate women’s leadership role, their capacity to contribute in all social, economic, and political sectors and their strong stance for social justice and equality.

Different themes of International Women’s Day are selected every year. For this year, 2021, women’s organizations and gender equality networks of Myanmar have appropriately chosen the theme of “Choose to Challenge Dictatorship.” We intentionally select this theme to manifest that we stand with people including women and young people from all walks of life who are determined to challenge militarism through many forms of non-violent civil disobedience movements.

People of Myanmar/Burma have shown their opposition to the military coup that was staged on February 1st through organizing large scale demonstrations to express their dissent, disapproval, and denunciation of the coup. We sternly condemn the heinous behaviour by the coup leaders in their brutal clamp down on demonstrations including using violence to disperse peaceful protestors, killings, the excess use of force, harassments, intimidations and arrests and detention of those who peacefully demonstrate their dissent.

We are deeply saddened to receive a report¹ that there have been thus over (50) deaths, including 6 women in this people’s struggle. As we salute the courage and determination of fallen heroes/sheroes, we make our solemn oath to continue to fight for justice, democracy, and human rights.

On this international women’s day, we declare human rights, gender equality, and justice can only be fulfilled and guaranteed under a federal democratic system. We, therefore will always resist any form of dictatorship and authoritarians.

- We condemn military’s actions which contravene democratic norms, and the majority of people’s will therefore we call for strong international action against the military dictators and their cronies.
- We strongly condemn current acts by the Myanmar/Burma Military, including the excess use of force, arrests and terrorization including killings of demonstrators.
- We demand the immediate release of democratically elected leaders and activists and absolute transfer of power back to the democratically elected civilian government.
- We demand the immediate halt of human rights violations, multiple forms of violence against women demonstrators, illegal arrests, excessive use of force to clamp down on the demonstrations, and misinformation campaigns.
- We urge the UN, ASEAN, and the international community to help resolve the current political turmoil arising from the usurping of a lawfully elected government.

¹ Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB)
Below is the statement issued by women’s organizations and networks

1. Women’s League of Burma (WLB)
2. Gender Equality Network (GEN)
3. Women’s Organizations Network – Myanmar (WON)
4. CEDAW Action Myanmar (CAM)
5. Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP)

A brief herstory of International Women’s Day

In the early years of the 20th Century, women faced various forms of injustice and unfair treatment. Therefore, they chose to challenge these injustices. In 1908, women’s garment workers marched to demand the right to vote, to have equal rights in politics and economics. They protested against bad working conditions and demanded better wages. At the Second Congress of Women’s Workers held in Copenhagen in 1910, a German woman Clara Zetkin, proposed recognition of an international women’s day to commemorate the women’s march to demand equality and human rights. This was unanimously endorsed, and starting from 1911, International Women’s Day is celebrated yearly.