Opinion Letter for setting up gender equality policy for a democratic federal union in future

We welcome to learn that about gender equality policy to be embedded in the future democratic federal union will be discussed at the political sector session during the 21st Century Panglong conference from 11 to 16 July 2018. We believe that it is a genuine important call for the country.

Practices of male chauvinism have been observed in our Myanmar cultural customs and behaviors. Most people do not take notice of discriminations originated from their own opinions and practices. Being accustomed to these discriminations brings a huge challenge regarding opportunities and justice in gender equality within all sectors including political sector. As a result, women’s participation in every decision making process of important executive, legislative and judicial branches of the country has been minimal and limited. Quota system is practiced to promote equal participation of women who are historically discriminated and excluded against their geographical, ethnical, language and religious backgrounds. The system brings women from diverse groups; and consequently, strengthens the meaning of democracy.

Over the 70 years, women in our country, have been facing violence due to wars and armed conflicts, without any justice and have not been given opportunities to take part in current peace process. In fact, these are huge challenges for women in gender equality, peace, ethnic groups’ self-determination, political and other sectors. With women involved in peace, political and other sectors, their needs, fears and experiences will be represented. It will contribute to draw comprehensive policies and recommendations from perspectives of both men and women for important decision-making of the country.

Hence, in order to establish a democratic federal union, a genuine gender equality policy should be laid down and implemented. Therefore, respective stakeholders should consider following points while discussing for particular sectors;
a. To set up policy for inclusion of at least 30 percent of women to be represented in political discussions at different levels and others sectors in peace process;
b. To implant gender-equality policy promoting election and quota systems in the Constitution;
c. To draw and implement policies to protect gender-based violence effectively to make sure safety and security of women and children in situations including wars and conflict zones;
d. To place an accountable and responsible policy ensuring truth and justice for affected women; and
e. To establish non-discriminatory policy against sexes and sexual orientations.

It is witnessed that stakeholders involved in the current peace process have been perseverant despite difficulties and challenges. Peace cannot be achieved without acknowledging the equality goals for ethnic groups in Myanmar rooted in history. Therefore, we urge to establish firm federal principles in such a main place as the 21st Century Panglong Conference aiming for a democratic federal union.

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**Women’s League of Burma (WLB)**

Women’s League of Burma is comprised of thirteen ethnic women groups with different backgrounds. It was established on December 9, 1999. The organization works for the empowerment and advancement of the status of women as well as building a democratic federal union and peace and reconciliation through capacity building, advocacy, research, and publications. [www.womenofburma.org](http://www.womenofburma.org).

**Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP)**

Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP), comprised of seven organizations and networks working for women’s rights, was founded in 2014 to respond to two long-striving challenges below;
1. Limited participation of women in negotiations and agreements about peace and security issues currently and
2. Urgent need of gender perspectives and priorities for implementation of Cease Fire and other peace agreements.

AGIPP involves in a range of activities from community to policy level engagement. www.agipp.org.