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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**BURMESE JUNTA'S PLAN FAILS TO DECEIVE THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

The Burma Action Group in South Australia again deplores the Burmese/Myanmar military junta rejecting a proposal for an open and free processes for drafting a National Constitution. In fact, the military junta seems to expect the National League for Democracy (NLD) and ethnic nationality delegates to simply rubber stamp a draft constitution which will only reflect military's narrow vision on Burma.

The National League for Democracy (NLD) and ethnic ceasefire groups have decided not to attend the National Convention. The reasons are that the military junta has laid down inflexible guidelines for the drafting of the constitution. Further, the junta refuses to allow reopening of the NLD offices throughout the country. The junta continues to impose restriction on freedom of speech.

Under these conditions a meaningful participation in framing a valid constitution is impossible for the representatives and Burmese population. Therefore it is understandable that the NLD and ethnic ceasefire groups decided to boycott the convention.

The United Nations has been critical of the military junta failing to cooperate with the international community to improve Burma's human rights record. The junta's so-call 'road-map' and 'national convention' in August 2003 were the desperate measures by junta to avoid a coordinated action by the United Nations.

The Burma Action Group in South Australia strongly urges the military junta to work sincerely with the NLD and ethnic delegates to achieve genuine national reconciliation. As a first step, the junta must release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, U Tin Oo and all other political prisoners immediately.

Further information: Dr Ne Oo --

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Burma constitution talks to begin

Aung San Suu Kyi has been held for nearly a year

Burma's military government is due to open talks on a new constitution on Monday, but the main pro-democracy party is boycotting them. The National League for Democracy has opted out of the talks as its leader Aung San Suu Kyi is under house arrest.

The junta resolved to press ahead with the constitutional convention, saying that the event was a historic step towards democracy. But correspondents say the event is likely to lack credibility. Some ethnic minority groups are also boycotting the talks, which have attracted about 1,000 delegates and are being held at a compound outside the capital Rangoon.

Burma, also known as Myanmar, has been criticised by the United States and the European Union over its human rights record and the continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and other opposition members.

Offices closed

The NLD announced its decision to boycott the convention on Friday after the junta refused to release Aung San Suu Kyi and vice chairman Tin Oo, both of whom have been detained since last May.

Party chairman Aung Shwe told reporters: "The NLD does not believe that it will be able to benefit the nation by participating in the National Convention. Therefore, the NLD decided that it will not attend." Aung Shwe also said the government had turned down the party's key demand that it reopen all of its offices before the convention. Currently, only the party's headquarters in Rangoon are open.

The NLD won 1990 elections by a landslide but the military refused to hand over power.

Outside Burma, the release of Aung San Suu Kyi is seen as a vitally important step in the path to democracy. But the government in Rangoon maintains the opposition leader is not a fundamental part of the process, a BBC correspondent in the region says.

A similar convention was held in the 1990s but it collapsed when the NLD walked out, accusing the junta of manipulating the process.