



THE 7TH DPN-PC MEETING: SIGNING OF THE NCA UNLIKELY TO BE IMMINENT

ENAC News Brief No. 24
6 November 2017

The Delegation for Political Negotiation (DPN) and Peace Commission (PC) held their 7th meeting at the National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC) in Yangon from 23-24 October 2017 to negotiate the 8 Points Proposal¹ of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). The negotiation mainly focused on Points 5 and 6, which deal with military issues and the role of the international community in ceasefire monitoring, respectively. The PC also revisited Point 1-4, requesting some alterations. Points 1-4 had previously been finalized at the 6th meeting, when the parties had agreed, at the insistence of PC, to not revisit them in the future. No agreement was reached on the Point 1-4 alterations. The DPN will report the proposed changes to the UNFC leadership, after which the points may require further negotiation at the 8th meeting, scheduled for the 8th of November 2017.

The two-day-long 7th meeting did not deliver any major new agreements. Issues concerning military affairs, ceasefire monitoring, and the role of international involvement in monitoring and dispute resolution remain unsolved. In order to break the deadlock, both parties agreed to focus on the military issues of Point 5 at the 8th meeting. Additionally, the PC continues to stand firmly behind its policy of excluding the international community from monitoring and dispute resolution mechanisms, necessitating further discussion on these topics.

Major disagreements remain unresolved, yet most media outlets have reported that great progress was made and that the UNFC is nearly ready to sign the NCA. However, the reality is more complex than this. While the PC exaggerates the progress made to build a sense of urgency, the DPN recognizes several remaining sticking points requiring negotiation. Point 5 contains particularly sensitive issues that will be negotiated in detail at the next round of talks. Unless the parties, especially the Tatmadaw, are willing to compromise more than usual, it is unlikely that the 8 Points will be settled at the 8th meeting. Furthermore, there are some new amendments that the PC requested that will require input and direction from UNFC leadership. Unless the UNFC fully accepts the proposed alterations, further negotiations on some of the previously finalized first four Points will now be required.

Beyond the substance of the Points, perhaps the most important issues remaining to be discussed are the legal binding of the Proposal and who will sign once an agreement is reached. These are sensitive issues that could further hinder the negotiation process. DPN wishes the 8 Points to be a legally binding supplement to the NCA. The government, however, wants to issue the Proposal as a statement or, at the most, register it in the government's official gazette. In summation, further discussion on the 8 Points and a sincere commitment by the government to accord the Proposal the legal status needed to guarantee full implementation are required before the UNFC will agree to sign the NCA. It is premature to predict that UNFC will imminently sign the NCA. ■

¹ The Proposal is interchangeably called the 8 Points Proposal and the 9 Points Proposal. However, since the 9th point of the proposal only states that UNFC will sign the NCA once the above 8 points are agreed, this Brief will refer to the Proposal as the 8 Points Proposal.