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Myanmar

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## Note to the Secretary-General

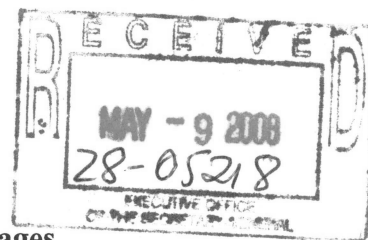
### Myanmar referendum: scenarios and messages

1. Since cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar over the weekend, the Government announced on 6 May that it would proceed with a constitutional referendum on 10 May as planned, except in some of the most affected areas where the vote has been postponed until 24 May. Although the full impact of the humanitarian crisis could still change this decision, the announcement suggests that the Government is driven by a political imperative to stick to its plan as much as possible in order not to appear to give in to outside pressure and let the crisis derail the next step in its political roadmap, which is the result of a 14-year long process.
2. There will likely be widespread international criticism of the holding of the referendum, even partially, under such conditions, and in that context pressure is likely to mount on the UN to pronounce itself on this issue. But public reaction should be calibrated to address the question within the broader context of the humanitarian crisis, without passing judgment on the validity of the process itself other than perhaps to continue to reiterate what has been previously stated about our view that the process needs to be inclusive and transparent.
3. In light of the above, three possible scenarios may inform the UN's public line with regard to the referendum:
  - (i) **Postponement of the referendum nation-wide** – Should the Government decide to postpone the referendum nation-wide, consideration could be given to issuing a statement taking note that such a decision is consistent with the priority need to dedicate all available resources and capacity to the emergency response efforts.
  - (ii) **Uneventful partial referendum** – If the Government proceeds with its current plan and the partial referendum is largely incident-free, any message could be limited on an if-asked basis, to taking note of the fact, without either endorsing or rejecting the process, but stressing the UN's continued focus on the humanitarian response.
  - (iii) **Violence and/or large-scale demonstrations** – If the Government proceeds with its current plan, the combination of humanitarian distress, skyrocketing food and fuel prices, and longstanding political discontent could potentially lead to demonstrations and repression, looting or a breakdown of law and order. Depending on the scale of any disturbance, a call for calm and restraint could be issued in the context of prevailing humanitarian conditions.
4. While a response to scenarios (i) and (ii) could wait until Monday, a response to scenario (iii) may need to be issued at any time. Since there is no monitoring capacity in the country, a direct line of communication has been established with the UNRC a.i. to ensure regular updates from the ground on any available information regarding the conduct of the referendum.
5. Any of the above responses would carry more credibility if a holding line could be used as soon as possible, and certainly before Saturday -- preferably on an if-asked basis -- making clear the UN feels that the government's priority at this time should be to dedicate all available resources and capacity to the emergency response efforts.

MAY - 9 2008

  
Ibrahim Gambari  
8 May 2008

Note to Mr. Nambiar

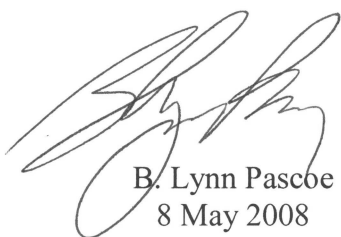


**Myanmar Referendum: Immediate Scenarios and Messages**

Please find attached a note from Mr. Gambari to the Secretary-General on immediate scenarios and messages regarding the planned referendum this weekend in Myanmar.

I would be grateful if you could kindly submit the attached to the Secretary-General's attention.

I note that point five has already been addressed by the statement on the referendum issued by the Secretary-General today.



B. Lynn Pascoe  
8 May 2008

cc: Mr. Holmes