



**OFFICE OF THE SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
KAREN NATIONAL UNION
KAWTHOOLEI**

Statement on the Occasion of Signing the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment protecting children in armed conflict and the Deed of Commitment prohibiting sexual violence in armed conflict and gender discrimination

We, the Karen National Union (KNU), are proud to sign the *Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict* and the *Deed of Commitment for the Prohibition of Sexual Violence in Situations of Armed Conflict and Towards the Elimination of Gender Discrimination*.

The KNU has been in arm struggle for more than six decades in order to achieve self-determination in our homeland.

In 1956, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) was formed to protect our people and to achieve our political goals. The KNLA is professionally trained and we consider that its military doctrine, code of conduct and rules of engagement meet international norms and standards. The KNLA respects international humanitarian law in its military operations. Our organization already has rules and regulations in place with regard to the protection of children and women in the armed conflict areas. Since 2004, our organization has effectively prohibited the military recruitment of those under the age of 18 into the KNLA; the KNU also provides basic education and health care to thousands of children in the areas under our control.

The KNLA was listed in Annex 1 of the UN Secretary General's Annual Report of Children and Armed Conflict in 2006. At that time, we had already entered into dialogue with the UN, and in this respect, in March 2007 our late President Saw Ba Thin Sein signed an undertaking prepared and presented to us by UNICEF that we understood was the initial step towards our delisting. Ironically, almost immediately afterwards the UN discontinued communication with us and, at the time of writing, such communication on this issue has yet to be resumed. We notice that we have remained listed in Annex 1 of the Secretary General's subsequent Annual Reports with no apparent means to secure our removal from the list. That said, we still consider ourselves bound by the 2007 undertaking mentioned above, and that we consider that the *Deed of Commitment under Geneva Call for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict* complements, rather than supersedes, that previous undertaking, and we remain open to resuming dialogue with the UN towards our delisting.

Therefore, we consider that by signing these Deeds of Commitment, we will continue to apply and reinforce our organization's existing rules and regulations. We, the KNU are honored to sign these Deeds of Commitment and look forward to co-operating with Geneva Call and other organizations to both ensure that children enjoy the protection and assistance that they deserve and ensure the prohibition of sexual violence and the elimination of gender discrimination.

Executive Committee
Karen National Union
Supreme Headquarter

Date –**21st, July 2013**
Pa'an, Karen State