

**PRESS RELEASE****Tatmadaw discharges children on anniversary of landmark Myanmar - United Nations accord**

**YANGON, 7 July 2013** – The United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator and the UNICEF today welcomed the discharge of forty-two (42) children<sup>i</sup> by the Myanmar Armed Forces (*Tatmadaw*) in accordance with the Myanmar Government's international commitment to end the recruitment and use of children by the army in Myanmar.

The children were discharged to their long awaiting families and friends in the presence of senior officials from the Tatmadaw, the Myanmar Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Social Welfare, Relief, Rehabilitation and Resettlement. The UN Resident Coordinator's Office and UNICEF were also present as co-chairs of the UN Country Task Force charged with facilitating Myanmar's implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1612 (UNSC 1612) in Myanmar together with representatives from other members of the Task Force.\*

"This discharge is the expression of a renewed commitment by the Government of Myanmar to ensuring UNSC 1612 is upheld as part of the current transition towards reform, good governance and inclusion. We expect the Tatmadaw will now be in a position to speed up the release of all children. We are very happy for the 42 children and their families today but we must accelerate efforts so that many more children benefit from release," said UN Resident Coordinator, Ashok Nigam.

Under a UNSC 1612 Action Plan for Myanmar, the Myanmar Government has agreed to locate all children recruited by the Tatmadaw with a view to ensuring their unconditional release. The Government has also committed to discharging and facilitating their quick reintegration back into their families and their communities. The Action Plan includes commitments to allow UN monitoring teams to access military facilities and to training military personnel on how to better protect, respect and promote the rights of Myanmar children.

"All parties recognise this is about the future of Myanmar. No child should have to endure the hardship of being taken away from their families, friends, schools and communities" said Mr Nigam. "Nothing justifies the recruitment of children in armed forces. An army is not a place for a child to grow up. We will continue working with the Myanmar Government and the Tatmadaw towards expanding access for UN monitoring teams, addressing identified systemic procedural weaknesses, and mobilising the Myanmar public in support of ending this practice for the sake of their children and the whole country," Mr Nigam added.

In his recent report to the UNSC on children and armed conflict in Myanmar, the UN Secretary-General welcomed that while Myanmar children are still being recruited into the Tatmadaw - following the signature of the Action Plan - new recruits have decreased. "Through today's discharge and by moving away from recruiting new children, the Myanmar Government and its armed forces continue to demonstrate their desire to end this deeply saddening practice" said UNICEF Representative, Bertrand Bainvel. "The Action Plan continues to be a unique opportunity to - once and for all - ensure that the Tatmadaw is a child-free armed force and is removed from the annex of the Secretary-General report which lists Parties to the conflict that recruit and use children." Mr Bainvel added.

"Ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on involvement of children in armed conflicts would also demonstrate the Myanmar Government is serious about ending this practice. Importantly, it would also signal to Myanmar non-state actors that the time to end the use of Myanmar children in conflict is now." Mr Bainvel concluded. [ends]

## **Background**

UN Security Council Resolution 1612, adopted in 2005, asked the UN Secretary-General to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism to provide timely and reliable information on six grave children's rights violations, including the recruitment and use of children in armed forces and armed groups. The six grave violations monitored and reported are:

- killing or maiming of children
- recruitment and use of children in armed forces and groups (relevant to the Action Plan)
- attacks against schools or hospitals
- rape or other grave sexual violence
- abduction of children
- denial of humanitarian access for children.

The "Tatmadaw" (together with its integrated border guard forces) is listed in Annex 1 alongside 7 other non-state armed group persistent perpetrators in Myanmar in the latest (public) report of the UN Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (2013) as follows:

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)
2. Kachin Independence Army (KIA)
3. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)
4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council
5. Karenni Army (KA)
6. Shan State Army South (SSA-S)
7. United Wa State Army (UWSA)

\*The UN Country Taskforce which includes UNICEF, the UN Resident Coordinator, UNHCR, ILO, UN OCHA, UNDP, WFP, UNFPA, Save the Children and World Vision continue their efforts with the Myanmar Government and the Tatmadaw towards the full implementation of commitments under the UNSC 1612 Action Plan in Myanmar.

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<sup>i</sup> Today's discharge included 34 children (under 18 years) and 8 young persons who had formerly been recruited as children.

## **About UNICEF**

UNICEF works in more than 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: <http://www.unicef.org>. Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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