

Senator the Hon. Marise Payne  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
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Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
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5 February 2021

### **Military Coup in Myanmar**

Dear Minister,

I write to you on behalf of the Australian Union movement to condemn the military coup in Myanmar which has suspended civilian government and effectively returned full power to the military.

We stand with the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar (CTUM) in their call to recognise the outcome of the recent election and in their defence of peace and democracy. The Australian Union movement has been a longstanding supporter of democratic reform in Myanmar, and through our global justice organisation Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA, has links with Myanmar workers and its emerging civil society and trade union movement. Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA's project work supports tripartite dialogue, assists workers organising in the formal and informal garment sectors, and addresses gender equality at the workplace including sexual harassment common in the young female garment workforces. This project work is funded in collaboration with the Dutch Government's development program and Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA maintains a small office with three staff in Yangon.

The recent coup is a direct attack on democracy that compounds the grave damage the Myanmar military has done to human rights, including the military's 2017 campaign of terror against the Rohingya people. As a key partner of Myanmar and a large regional power, the Australian Government must send a clear signal to Myanmar's military leaders that the bilateral relationship can only continue if democracy is restored. I enclose a joint statement by the ACTU and Australian civil society organisations calling on the Australian Government to take the following urgent actions to support democracy in Myanmar:

- i • Support comprehensive, targeted sanctions against the military, its leaders and its business interests and business partners;
- Suspend all military-to-military cooperation between the Australian Defence Forces and the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Armed Forces);
- Use all diplomatic leverage and influence to ensure rule of law is upheld and a return to democratic norms, civilian led government and the immediate release of those men and women detained including journalists, civil society activists and MPs;
- Support accountability mechanisms and proceedings including at the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

The Australian Union movement, along with the global trade union movement, will continue to closely monitor the human rights situation in Myanmar and we look forward to the Australian Government taking strong action to support human rights and democratic reforms.

Yours sincerely



Michele O'Neil  
**President**