

**Statement on behalf of the Australian Civil Society Coalition on WPS
DFAT-Civil Society Myanmar Briefing – 27 May 2022**

This statement is made on behalf of the Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security, which is a non-partisan and independent coalition of civil society organisations, networks and individuals working to advance the WPS Agenda in Australia, the region and globally. Members of the Coalition do this through their daily work including building evidence and practice, raising awareness, facilitating dialogue and supporting women's rights partners in Australia and overseas.

In Myanmar, Coalition members are delivering development programs and humanitarian assistance and are engaged in documentation and research on conflict related sexual violence.

The Coalition is deeply concerned that rising violence and insecurity is preventing women and girls in Myanmar from accessing their basic rights, including the right to work, to education, and to sexual and reproductive rights and health care services. The collapsed health care system, financial barriers and movement restrictions are jeopardizing women's security and wellbeing. We are witnessing a deterioration in gender equality and development gains in Myanmar, underscored by the 20 million people who have been plunged into poverty as a result of the political crisis.

Serious protection concerns persist with continued reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence perpetrated against activists and detainees.

The Coalition is also concerned about the situation facing Myanmar women refugees and their families in Australia, who need ongoing protection and certainty about their visa status.

The Coalition urges the Australian Government –

1. To prioritise protection of the rights of women and girls, particularly women human rights defenders, those from marginalised ethnic communities and those in Australia on temporary protection visas;
2. To resource efforts to prevent, respond to and document cases of sexual violence;
3. To promote and resource women's participation in all efforts by the global community to resolve the current crisis;
4. To provide flexible multiyear core funding to women's rights organisations in Myanmar and those operating in neighbouring countries; and
5. To advocate for unimpeded humanitarian access in order to be able to strengthen support services to women in IDP camps, including GBV protection and response and SRHR services.

Women human rights defenders have been at the forefront of the pro-democracy resistance movement. We believe it is crucial to listen to the voices and priorities of Myanmar civil society and activists within the diaspora who are working towards a gender just and inclusive peace. We invite Mi Cherry Soe from the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process based in Myanmar, followed by Lisa Le Yee Mon from the Myanmar Women Activists (Australia) group to speak to today's briefing.