

**CALD-LI Statement on the humanitarian crisis in Burma
(May 18, 2008)**

The President of Liberal International (LI), Lord John Alderdice and the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) echo the expression of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon of "deep concern and immense frustration over the hampered efforts to usher humanitarian aid and disaster relief to the thousands of victims of Cyclone Nargis in Burma.

CALD and LI note with increasing alarm the military regime's obstinate disregard for more extensive international assistance and intervention to address what is a staggering catastrophe and prevent what could well be the onset of a deadly epidemics.

In such a dire situation, CALD reiterates the call of its member party, the National Council for the Union of Burma, for full attention to the humanitarian crisis and to defer the referendum on a new constitution, the process which excluded Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy.

Given the state's full control of media, early warnings of the impending cyclone by Thailand and India had been blocked by the junta, thereby directly endangering the lives of hundreds of thousands in the Irrawaddy Delta and surrounding regions. In the cyclone's aftermath, the lack of verifiable information provided by the junta, is adding to the impact and extent of the human tragedy.

Democracy and its fundamental requisites of freedom and respect for human rights, which CALD and LI embrace as their mandate, are the bedrock for the flourishing of society. The scale of devastation and death in Burma – and the harrowing and repressive official response of the regime – only serve to amplify the critical urgency of bringing democracy and freedom to the long-suffering people of Burma.

LI and CALD call for the military junta to respond to the call of the international community and the UN Secretary-General to accept assistance and save lives in Burma immediately and unconditionally.