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I have just completed my second trip to Burma.

During my two-day trip, I met with a wide variety of stakeholders inside the country. In Nay Pyi Taw, I held consultations with the Minister of Science and Technology, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Information and the Spokes Authoritative Team, the Union Election Commission, the Labor Minister, and the head of the USDA.

In Rangoon, I met with a number of community leaders of ethnic minority groups, the National League for Democracy, key members of the diplomatic corps, NGOs, a variety of political players, and Aung San Suu Kyi.

This trip comes as part of a process the Obama Administration launched last year. In February 2009, Secretary Clinton announced that we would undertake a review of our Burma policy, stating clearly that neither sanctions nor engagement, when implemented alone, had succeeded in influencing Burma's generals. Over the course of the seven months of the policy review, we consulted widely and deliberately in order to seek the best ideas from around the world and at home. The result of that extensive review was to launch a policy of pragmatic engagement with Burma's leadership. We have engaged in senior-level dialogue with the regime. Yet we have not lifted sanctions, nor have we abandoned our commitment to the people of Burma. Our strategic goal for Burma remains unchanged: we wish to see a more prosperous, democratic Burma that lives in peace with its people and with its neighbors.

The United States has approached this engagement with goodwill. We continue to consult and coordinate closely with key countries, including those within ASEAN, the European Union, with India, Japan, China and others, and a number of players outside governments seeking a more positive future in Burma.

The key objective of my trip to Burma was to underscore the purposes and principles of our engagement, and to lay out the reasons for our profound disappointment in what we have witnessed to date.

During various discussions with Burma's senior leadership, we have outlined a proposal for a credible dialogue among all stakeholders in Burma that would allow all sides to enter into such a dialogue with dignity. Unfortunately, the regime has chosen to move ahead unilaterally – without consultation from key stakeholders – towards elections planned for this year. As a direct result, what we have seen to date leads us to believe that these elections will lack international legitimacy. We urge the regime to take immediate steps to open the process in the time remaining before the elections.

We have also asked for greater respect for human rights and the release of political prisoners. The regime has detained many of Burma's brightest and most patriotic citizens, citizens that could contribute greatly to ensuring a more prosperous future for their country. Instead the regime has silenced them, dispersing them to remote locations throughout the country where the generals hope they will be forgotten. They are not.

We have raised our persistent concerns about the increasing tensions between Burma's ethnic minorities and the central government that have resulted in violence along the country's borders. The regime has ratcheted up the pressure on Burma's ethnic groups in preparation for this year's elections, forcing countless innocent civilians to flee. Burma cannot move forward while the government itself persists in launching attacks against its own people to force compliance with a proposal its ethnic groups cannot accept. The very stability the regime seeks will continue to be elusive until a peaceable solution can be found through dialogue.

Finally, we have urged Burma's senior leadership to abide by its own commitment to fully comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1874. Recent developments call into question that commitment. I have asked the Burmese leadership to work with the United States and others to put into place a transparent process to assure the international community that Burma is abiding by its international commitments. Without such a process, the United States maintains the right to take independent action within the relevant frameworks established by the international community.

Although we are profoundly disappointed by the response of the Burmese leadership, I remain inspired by those outside the government with whom I met. I admire the resolve of Burma's ethnic groups that wish to live in peace and to have a representative stake in the future of their own country. I respect the difficult decision Burma's political parties have taken regarding the upcoming elections. Some have decided to participate, some will not. It is the right of a free people to make those decisions for themselves, and the United States respects their decisions.

I would like to take a moment to applaud the leaders of the National League for Democracy – a political party that has struggled for more than two decades to improve the lives of the Burmese people – with whom I held a lengthy meeting. Although having been denied a legal framework in which to operate by the regime's own flawed rules, its leadership remains committed to working on behalf of and for the Burmese people. The United States will continue to stand behind all those working to support Burma's people, including the National League for Democracy, however it may constitute itself in the future.

Finally, I was again moved by the perseverance and the commitment Aung San Suu Kyi has shown to the cause of a more just and benevolent Burma and to the Burmese people themselves. She has demonstrated compassion and tolerance for her captors in the face of repeated indignities. It is simply tragic that Burma's generals have rebuffed her countless appeals to work together to find a peaceable solution for a more prosperous future.

The strength and resilience of those who struggle continue to inspire us. The United States stands by the Burmese people in their desire for a more democratic, prosperous, and peaceful nation.