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Press Release

Burmese Community welcomes Aung San Suu Kyi to the Czech Republic

Prague, 13 September 2013. On the occasion of the upcoming visit by Burmese opposition politician Aung San Suu Kyi to the Czech Republic, the Czech nonprofit organization Burma Center Prague sends greetings from the Burmese community and expresses the hope that the democratization of Burma will include all of its citizens.

The Burmese community in the Czech Republic welcomes the news that the leader of the Burmese opposition, Nobel Peace Prize Winner Madame Aung San Suu Kyi, is planning to visit the Czech Republic to attend the Forum 2000 conference. At the same time, the Burmese community would like to express its regrets that Madame Suu Kyi's longtime supporter, former Czech President Václav Havel, did not live to see this occasion. It was due to Havel's efforts in particular that Madame Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1991.

Madame Suu Kyi has the opportunity to travel abroad and the guarantee of return to her own country as a result of the political reforms initiated by the Burmese junta in 2010 when she was released from house arrest. Currently, a nominally civilian government is now ruling Burma in which many representatives of the Army are participating in key positions. Even though the country is opening up, especially in the larger cities, and is attracting investors and tourists, these democratic and economic reforms have not yet made themselves felt in all layers of society, nor have they made themselves felt in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities.

Burma Center Prague considers this time of transition to a genuine democracy to be crucial. The Czech Republic can now contribute to the successful transformation of the country by sharing its own experience with such a transformation. The organization combines Burmese and European forces to promote developments that involve Burmese citizens at all levels, including the millions living in exile, in the political decision-making processes that will lead to the creation of a society marked by mutual respect between all ethnic groups and all religions. It will also be essential to end the armed conflicts in Burma and ensure legal security for all people living there long-term.

The Burmese community in the Czech Republic is comprised of about 150 people, most of whom came here as either refugees or students and were granted asylum or made their homes here. In the year 2005, the Burmese

community in the Czech Republic began its regular, symbolic actions on Madame Suu Kyi's birthday to draw attention to her unjust imprisonment.

About Burma Center Prague:

Burma Center Prague (*Barmské Centrum Praha*) is a public benefit corporation established in 2006 by the Burmese community in the Czech Republic together with Czech and international supporters of Burma. The mission of the organization is to contribute to democratization in Burma, to adherence to human rights in Burma, to improve the situations of everyone inside Burma, and to improve the situations of Burmese living in exile. Within the framework of several different projects, Burma Center Prague provides aid to Burmese refugees in the Czech Republic and to Burmese self-help groups in Burma and India.

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