

Geneva and Brussels, 1 February 2022

**TO: President Ursula von der Leyen, European Commission**

**CC:**

**Mr Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive Vice-President, European Commission**

**Mr Josep Borrell Fontelles, Vice-President, European Commission**

**Ms Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner, International Partnerships, European Commission**

### **Industrial European and Global Trade Unions call on EU to take stronger action against the military junta in Myanmar, including withdrawal of EBA preferences**

Dear President von der Leyen,

On behalf of [IndustriALL Global Union](#) and [industriAll European Trade Union](#), both representing millions of workers in mining, energy and manufacturing industries in Europe and worldwide, we are writing to you again to reiterate our grave concerns about the current situation in Myanmar on the occasion of the **first anniversary of the military coup d'état on 1 February 2022**.

Since the coup d'état, the military junta has arrested over 11,500 civilians, trade unionists, journalists, cultural workers, carried out 64 death penalties and killed more than 1,500 civilians, including at least 100 children, aged between 14 months and 17 years.

In addition, on Christmas Eve, the military junta orchestrated a massive brutal attack in the Kayah State, killing and burning the bodies of 38 civilians, including women and children, who were fleeing the conflict and seeking refuge.

Furthermore, a junta-controlled court recently sentenced two pro-democracy activists to the death sentence. Both activists were accused of leading and planning guerilla attacks against the junta's forces and their allies.

The United Nations estimates that there are more than 1.6 million internally displaced persons and refugees due to the conflict in Chin, Kachin, Rakhine and Shan States in Myanmar. In addition, there are 241,000 refugees in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand.

Crimes against humanity continue unabated in Myanmar and the military junta wildly use punishment against different groups and abduct family members of those with arrest warrants.

**Under the circumstances, the international community, particularly the European Union, must stand up, take a stronger political stance and implement economic actions to stop this carnage!**

Last October, a European Parliament resolution repeated *"its call on the Commission to swiftly launch an investigation into the trade preferences that benefit Myanmar, especially regarding*

*companies owned by members of the Myanmar military, in specific sectors and to keep Parliament duly informed of the steps to take”.*

*The Resolution also underlined that “the enhanced engagement process had already been established in 2018, focusing on compliance with international human rights conventions and labor rights, and that the coup reversed the progress made during the democratization process, thereby undermining the conditions for granting EBA preferences”.*

We wish to underscore the fact that the EU is the third largest trading partner of Myanmar, after China and Thailand. EU imports from Myanmar in 2018 totalled €2.3 billion, with around €250 million import duty savings thanks to Everything But Arms (EBA) preferences.

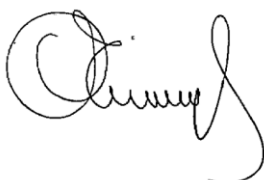
The EU’s Generalised Scheme of Preferences is supposed to help developing and least developed countries to alleviate poverty and create jobs, based on international values and principles, including labour and human rights. Trade unions support the aim of the Commission to use EU trade measures to improve working standards and conditions in developing countries, which should include the core ILO conventions as a bare minimum.

**Therefore, IndustriALL Global Union and industriAll European Trade Union call on the EU:**

- **To stand up to the unacceptable brutal acts of the military junta in Myanmar and to take urgent stronger actions using its leverage on trade, particularly, but not limited to, withdrawing EBA preferences;**
- **To recognise the National Unity Government (NUG) and support its accreditation vis-à-vis UN and its agencies;**
- **To urge the military junta to stop killing, detaining, torturing and intimidating its people, and immediately, and unconditionally, release all political leaders, workers, trade unionists and human rights defenders imprisoned in Myanmar;**
- **To insist on the withdrawal of arrest warrants against trade union activities and labour activists based solely on their peaceful activities, and to demand an end to the attacks on freedom of association and freedom of expression in Myanmar.**

We anticipate your prompt answer and action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luc Triangle".

**Luc Triangle**  
General Secretary  
IndustriAll European Trade Union

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Atle Høie".

**Atle Høie**  
General Secretary  
IndustriALL Global Trade Union