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Myanmar labour movement's economic and political challenges to the military junta  
power.**

**ABSTRACT**

*After shortly describing the political reasons at the basis of the military coup of February 1st 2021, and the international dynamics that facilitated it, the paper will analyze the crucial role of women, youth and labour organizations in the construction of the Civil Disobedience Movement, the role of the general strikes of the first months; the role of public service, university school professors, teachers, doctors, railway and energy workers and other staff; the widespread internal boycotting campaign of products from factories linked to the junta with the aim of paralyzing the economy and strangling the junta power; the role of trade, economic and political restrictive measures decided by some governments and the EU, and the obstacles behind similar decisions at the UN level; The elaboration of the labour movement strategies toward the definition of a new federal democratic Constitution; The reasons behind the Labour Alliance and other 183 organizations request for Comprehensive Economic Sanctions. That should include the financial, insurance and reinsurance sectors, the garment supply chain, and the impossible negotiations to save jobs and decent working conditions. The role of the CDM to support the NUG request for their recognition, and for the SAC credential withdrawal, starting from the WHO, the ILO the FAO and finally at the UN, and the consequent refusal of the SAC and of its proposal for new elections in 2023.*

If one wants to explain, albeit broadly, the main reasons for the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2021 military coup and its impact on the country and its main actors, it is necessary to explain the background that produced it.

The last 5 years Aung San Suu Kyi government (1 April 2016 -1 February 2021) marked a series of mixed results. Despite its victory, the NLD has faced a number of political and institutional constraints, rooted in the military-designed political system, and in the lack military political will to make major concessions to the NLD, but also in the lack of governing experience and ministerial competence of the NLD leaders. For instance, the Minister of Labor of Aung San Suu Kyi government was a former military with no labor or industrial relations culture. Nevertheless, despite some interesting and positive socio-economic results, the limits of a difficult and poorly tolerated coexistence between the military and civil power could not be overcome.

From the economic point of view, while in 2010 agriculture was the main contributor to the GDP with 42,9% followed by the service sector 37.3% and by industry 19.8% respectively, in 2017/18, the service sector grew in importance representing 41,9% of the GDP, while industry the 30.9%, and agriculture the 27.1%<sup>1</sup>.

Total exports increased by 31%, from US\$ 12.523 million in 2014/15, to US\$ 16.446 million in 2017/18<sup>2</sup>. In any case, despite such growth, the jobs growth remained slow: 38.9 % of the

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank' Myanmar Economic Monitor, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Myanmar Central Statistic Organization, 2017 & 2018

working population remained out of the labor force, and an estimated 4.25 million people had to continue to migrate abroad<sup>3</sup>.

During the NLD government, one of the most important changes under the political point of view, was the shifting of the GAD (General Administration Department), from the military lead Ministry of Home Affairs, to that of the Burmese leader's cabinet. A red line that nobody thought could be crossed, since the GAD strictly controls from the top ministries directors generals to the remotest township administrations. A big power shift, that empowered the civil government, as well as State and Regions governments over down to the 330 townships and the 17.000 wards and village tracts. Under the NLD administration a series of fundamental investments, such as those in energy networks (the level of electrification of the country grew from 33% to 50% in four years) and those in the construction of roads and bridges, started changing the daily life of millions of people. The school sector saw a dramatic increase in the resources invested: from 251 million in 2012 to 1.2 billion U \$ S in 2016. The same for the health sector which has gone from an investment of 20.2 million US \$ in 2012 to 840 million. in 2017/18.

The insurmountable problems remained those connected with the impossible reform of the constitution, the

complex peace dialogues, and strictly connected to these, the relations with ethnic minorities. The military had never had any intention of downsizing its political role and, above all, the economic role particularly in economic sectors present in the ethnic States: gas and oil, mining, teak, jade etc. Linked to that the thorny tripartite talks for peace, between the army, the civil government, and ethnic representatives have gone on in fits and starts. The distances did not shorten, especially in the face of increased violence by the military in the Kachin and Rakhine States.

The most severe backlash was caused by the Rohingya crisis, on the 25th of August 2016, the day after Aung San Suu Kyi and Kofi Annan's presentation of the Rakhine Concluding Recommendations. That report presented a very important work plan proposing the rewriting of the law on citizenship, the freedom of movement of the Rohingya, the closure of internal refugee camps, the promotion of decent work in productive investments, gender equality, and a series of measures to overcome ethnic and religious discrimination.

A Commission, that Min Aung Hlaing, head of the armed forces, had always rowed against because normalization would have meant a reduction of the military importance.

That day, the response of the military to the terrorist attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army to 30 border police positions in Rakhine, was so violent to be denounced as a genocide: 800,000 people had to flee to Bangladesh.

It was the beginning of the attacks toward Aung San Suu Kyi, used by the military to undermine her status, and her international credibility.

In this difficult and obligatory coexistence, (not often understood by the international media, which have quite often painted the relationship between Aung San Suu Kyi and the military, as idyllic, or of connivance, to the detriment of ethnic nationalities), the electoral results of November 8<sup>th</sup> 2020, that assigned the NLD an overwhelming victory, resented the straw that broke the camel's back.

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3 3 Job creation in Myanmar's Trade agenda Working Paper n. 19 2020, by Min Zar Ni Linm S. Kanay De and Janarue Glutting

The State Councilor Party gained 83% of the available seats while the USDP, the military puppet party, got only 7%. Too little for Min Aung Hlaing, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, to be elected President of the Republic. A fundamental position for him, that would protect him from a potential conviction for war crimes and genocide, that could come from the International Criminal Court.

On January 29, in a surely stormy meeting, his deputy tried without success to impose his appointment as President on Aung San Suu Kyi. In the three months that go from the elections to the coup, the military put in place a series of heavy threats against the government to persuade the Lady to more mild advice.

The coup did not come like a bolt from the blue. The overwhelming victory of the NLD would have jeopardized not only the status of the commander in chief but also the enormous economic interests of the army. The head of the armed forces and a small group of Generals controlled the 80% of the economic sectors, which are the most profitable (mining, gas, oil, precious stones, industry, etc.) through the two large holding UMEH and MEC, with 120 companies under them.

During the NLD administration, new laws aimed at aligning the country to international standards of transparency, anti-corruption, compliance with basic environmental and social standards. Regulations that were a stumbling block for the implementation of the major infrastructure projects and works that China should be able to develop in Burma/Myanmar, in order to guarantee itself access to the sea, to connect its Yunnan region. Thus, the alliance between the military and China also responded to the need to cut short with all the procedures of democratic governance, consultation, transparency, and "accountability" imported by the international institutions.

Moreover, by joining the EITI (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) the government was eating away at the military's safes.

The new government would have approved new rules on the transparent companies governance, especially the extractive ones, on the obligations of social and environmental impact assessment of major infrastructure projects planned with China, and above all a new law to seriously fight the production of opium and amphetamines. Profits, that never arrived in the state coffers, but in those of the foreign military accounts that the International Monetary Fund has estimated to be the US \$ 6.7 billion each year..

Not to mention the illegal economy: Burma is the first producer of methamphetamines in the world, the second of opium. All sectors under the control of militias linked to the military. In 2019 the proceeds from the production of methamphetamines reached 71 billion US \$. The sale of jade reached 31 billion in 2014, rubies to 56 million, etc .

From the outset, after the coup, the whole population strongly reacted to it. Main towns and village's residents went out on the streets and onto the balconies, banging pots in protest against the coup. Freedom, savored after 50 years of dictatorship, would have not been so easily compressible again. Immediately before the coup, on January 30, 2021, the Confederation of Myanmar Trade Unions (CTUM) declared its intention to oppose any kind of temptation and action that could have been possibly undertaken through a coup. On the 1st of February, the CTUM again declared: *"Since we have already tried these devastating experiences, we, the CTUM declare that we do not collaborate with the military junta on any*

*question concerning the issues of work. So we the CTUM announce the resignation from all tripartite mechanisms”.*

The CTUM mobilized immediately its 110.000 members all over the country, becoming the backbone of the brand-new Civil Disobedience Movement. This could happen, also thanks to the fact that the unions were coming out from a long experience of clandestine organizing, during the previous dictatorship, and thanks to the fact that they could count on a large labor activists network, that in unison began to organize strikes, and demonstrations throughout the country and in all economic sectors, stopping also all the government functions.

In response to that, on the 8th of February, the military regime announced the prohibition of freedom of association, and penalties for those who broke the rules.

The CTUM launched a call on the international trade unions and its members, to isolate the military attaché offices in foreign countries, to start shareholders actions on investors working with military-owned enterprises. and inside the country a call to boycott all goods and services produced by military companies, publishing a list of them. The response was huge, and it after one year, is still in place. Every day hundreds of thousands of workers across Myanmar participated in peaceful to huge rallies against the unlawful military coup, risking harassment, violence, detention, and to be shot.

On February the 17th, eleven members of the Myanmar Press Council, and more than 12 other Myanmar Times journalists resigned in protest against the junta's new restrictions on press freedom. The military accused the media of instigating the protests. The new directives required not to use the words "regime" or "junta" when referring to the State Administrative Council (SAC). The military was already in a corner and did not know how to get out of it. They did not plan that the reaction could be so compact and robust, and, above all, that could last so long.

Streets continued to be overrun by demonstrators, workers and people of all ages and social backgrounds. Youth and women started to play a key role.

Private banks closed for days and still now private banks are facing huge problems, due to employees strikes while military began to arrest the ministerial staff. Factory workers continued to strike. Train drivers who refused to work were arrested and forced to drive the trains.

Already on the 18th of February, the Industrial Workers Federation of Myanmar (IWFM) appealed on the international brands to respect workers rights: *“As workers sacrifice themselves in restoring democracy in the country, we call upon all suppliers in the Myanmar garment, shoe, and leather industry to respect workers’ fundamental freedom of association, expression, and peaceful assembly and to refrain from imposing disciplinary actions against workers for their participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement, and maintain dialogue with the trade unions in resolving differences and addressing the current crisis”*. Some brands responded positively issuing a declaration.

The garment sector has been particularly affected by the Covid19 and the Coup. According to the MGMA survey around 600 factories operating are still operating, while 170/200 closed since January 2020.<sup>4</sup> According to the EuroCham Myanmar,<sup>5</sup> there were believed to be over 150 foreign brands sourcing from Myanmar. In 2020 the Myanmar garment exports to the

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<sup>4</sup> Garment Sector Update: Interview with MGMA Secretary-General Daw Khine Khine Nwe

<sup>5</sup> Eurocham Myanmar Myanmar Garment Sector Fact sheet, prepared by Eurocham Myanmar’s Garment Advocacy group.

EU was around US\$2.5 Bn, US\$2.63 Bn, if footwear and accessories, such as leather goods, handbags and travel goods are included.

The military regime charged the CTUM Central Committee members and Trade Union leaders under the Penal Code 505, that does not foresee bail, but jail for a minimum of 2 years.

Cabin crew, civilian aircraft tower personnel, and civilian aircraft engineers stopped their work paralyzing the airports, but the maps that trace the flights registered an intensification of flights between Kunming and Myanmar. Despite the denials of the Chinese ambassador to Burma, concerns about Beijing's active support for the Burmese military were mounting. At the end of February in the Industrial townships, the military continued to harass workers at their homes or accommodations. They threatened the hostel owners of losing their license if they were harboring activists, trade union leaders, etc. While hundreds of civil servants at all levels, in ministries received orders to return to work "*if not action was taken*".

In thousands were dismissed. Others who were working in the field did not reply to the warning letters, and being skilled workers that could not be easily replaced, were not dismissed. Train drivers mechanics train signal operators, oil and gas production teams, engineers, crude oil refinery workers, continued to block their activities and in doing so blocked the production. In those weeks, all sources of energy extraction stopped, as well as the Nyaungdone gas production plant – that was gaining about 270 million kays per day, the Ayadaw gas production plant, that feeds the gas to run the turbines of the military-owned factories in Wazi township (Magwe Region) stopped impeding the functioning of all the factories, including the companies printing bullets and banknotes, obliging the SAC to buy them in China. Since also the Thanpayakan refinery was blocked by the workers, the military in anticipation of this, some days before, took away three weeks supply of processed fuel, and no reserve was left.

The military attempted to divide the Civil Service workers and the unions – but the majority of the leaders had a minimum of twenty years of service, and it was not possible to dismiss them. The military tried to phone trade union leaders, to frighten them, and the MOLIP issued an order to the private sector factory owners to reopen by end of February, to pay salary the next day, and to dismiss those who did not arrive in time at the factory gates. In that situation, the World Bank informed the regime that all drawdowns had been suspended.

On the 7th of March, 18 labor organizations published a statement organizing an "*extended nationwide work stoppage against the military coup and for the future of Myanmar democracy*". And declaring: "*We are not slaves to the military junta now and we never shall be*". The statement called for "*the expansion of the CDM to all Myanmar people starting from March the 8th; the full extended shutdown of the Myanmar economy*".

The labor movement succeeded in paralyzing the nation. The day after the statement publication, the labor movement all workplaces shuttered all over the country, and hundreds of thousands of people went on the streets. In reply to the country paralysis, provoked by trade unions and CDM, the military banned 16 labor unions declaring them to be "illegal organizations". The SAC arrested or filed arrest orders, for at least 71 individual union leaders <sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Solidarity Center Myanmar: Unions organize general strike as military violently cracks down Kate Conradt Mar 9, 2021



In 135 confirmed collective cases, workers have been fired for participating in street protests, while thousands more had their factory jobs threatened, if they further participated in the CDM. On that day more than 60 people have been killed and two thousand arrested. But more arrests happened on the 14th of March general strike when many Chinese-owned factories were put on fire. Following that terrible day, the Mandalay and 6 Yangon industrial zones (Hlaing Thar Yar, Shwe Pyi Thar, South Dagon, North Dagon, Dagon Seikkan, and North Okklapa) started to be subject to martial law, which gave and still gives full administrative judicial authority to the military. From that day workers could be sentenced to many years of jail and hard labor for no reason.

In Hlaing Thar Yar (Yangon) with more than 500 factories in operation, from March onwards, between 150,000 and 200,000 workers fled the zone due to random killings, arbitrary arrests, violence, and arson attacks on houses and factories.

IWFM, which is part of the ACT agreement<sup>7</sup> discussed and agreed with the ACT members' brands, that suppliers, should have not to punish those workers who exercised their rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, and joined the demonstrations. The agreement put into place a Fast Track Dispute Resolution Mechanism, through which workers, or their representatives could contact the IWFM to file complaints relating to concerns over the respect for workers' rights, including termination without severance pay. IWFM has been proactively documenting labor rights violations cases and negotiating through the Dispute resolution mechanism as much as it could, particularly on wage payment, responding in various ways, despite the severe restrictions placed upon the trade unions, by the military junta, submitting cases with proposed remedies to IndustriALL's and ACT for negotiations with the brands. In August 17 out of the 31 manufacturers listed as violators during that period has attracted ACT's concern as they were linked with specific brands committed to ACT agreements, they should have been held liable for such violations by the brands, unless they work towards correcting them. But despite that while with some suppliers the mechanism could reach agreement on arrear wage payment, the major violations cannot be solved for the harassment and human rights restrictions introduced by the dictatorship. For this reason in the impossibility to grant the respect of the fundamental labor rights and consequently the brands due diligence, the IWFM requested brands to leave the country. After the 14<sup>th</sup> of March struggle, hundreds of thousand workers lost jobs, since factories asked workers to go back to work in a situation in which industrial zones could not be reached due to security reasons. IWFM tried to protect workers from losing jobs, by demanding brands to oblige suppliers to allow workers in unpaid leave, since the number of cases where to numerous and they could not be solved through the mechanism. But there was not a positive answer so hundreds of thousand workers lost jobs in garment sector only in April and May.

On June 9, 2021 a list of 77 investors with more than 3.9 trillion USD in combined assets under management or advisement, many of them committed to the UN guiding principles, **declared that they expected companies to uphold their corporate responsibility to respect human rights** by undertaking enhanced due diligence to address and prevent human rights harms, and in so doing, mitigate risks associated with such violations and called

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<sup>7</sup> Action, Collaboration, Transformation between global brands, retailers, and trade unions to transform the garment, textile, and footwear industry and achieve living wages for workers through collective bargaining at the industry level

companies across all sectors with business activities or business relations in Myanmar to **assess and address** all identified actual and potential human rights impacts of their business activities and relationships, and take steps to mitigate and prevent them.<sup>8</sup> According to Business and Human rights Resource Center, Businesses operating in Myanmar failed to take sufficient action to listen to workers and communities who continue to suffer disproportionately under the military junta's rule. They failed to respond to allegations of abuse about their Myanmar operations.

The CTUM international campaign succeeded to block the SAC credentials to the 2021 ILO Conference, during which a strong resolution against the military coup, was approved. It deplored: *“the arbitrary arrests, detention, intimidation, threats, and acts of violence against trade unionists and others peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, as well as the destruction of factories and other workplaces,”*

The ILO Resolution, recognizing *“the serious risks for the capacity of employers, following the military coup on 1 February 2021, to provide for decent work and the sustainability of their enterprises”* recommended that *“Member States support the restoration of democracy in Myanmar including through the United Nations, other multilateral bodies, regional groupings, and dialogues, and bilateral engagement, as appropriate, recognizing the important role of workers' and employers' organizations in advancing the prompt restoration of democratic order and civilian rule and the continuation of the transition to democracy in Myanmar”*. Most importantly it recommended *“that Member States support the restoration of democracy in Myanmar including through the United Nations, other multilateral bodies, regional groupings and dialogues, and bilateral engagement, as appropriate, recognizing the important role of workers' and employers' organizations in advancing the prompt restoration of democratic order and civilian rule and the continuation of the transition to democracy in Myanmar.”*

Unfortunately, such call, together with other UN resolutions, have been substantially neglected, particularly by the UNSC, due to China and Russia blockages, but also by the shyness of governments and the EU, that have been too weak and partial in their diplomatic and political action, as well as, in the adoption of restrictive measures, capable of strangling the financial and economic resources of the military junta.

Following to the 109 ILO Conference, the November 2021 343 Session of the ILO Governing Body<sup>9</sup> reaffirmed *“its profound concern on the “ongoing practice of the military authorities including the large scale use of lethal violence, and the use of forced labor, as well as the harassment, ongoing intimidation, arrests and detention of trade unionists..”* Moreover, *“it expressed deep concern that the military authorities have taken no steps to respect and protect the status of the ILO Liaison Office in Myanmar and all ILO staff in Myanmar and to refrain from interference in its operations”*

Huge amount of data collected during the months confirmed a series of diffused human rights violations committed by international brands suppliers.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.business-humanrights.org/es/%C3%BAltimas-noticias/investor-statement-on-human-rights-and-business-activities-in-myanmar/>

<sup>9</sup> ILO GB 343 Session 15. October 2021 Follow-up to the resolutions concerning Myanmar adopted by the International Labor Conference at its 102nd (2013) and 109th (2021) Sessions

Still after one year, hospitals are not properly functioning because, health care workers continued a boycott of state-run hospitals, and still now 70 % of them have abandoned their jobs and joined the CDM, building a shadow health system<sup>10</sup> supported by the NUG. The junta issued arrest warrants for hundreds of healthcare workers, forcing them into hiding. and raided charity and health facilities, destroying, damaging or confiscating medical equipment, while abducting, beating, and arbitrarily detaining doctors, nurses and other colleagues.

According to verified data, collected among workers by the CTUM, during this year, **130.000** teachers and **11.000** university professors have been suspended from their jobs, due to their participation to the Civil Disobedience Movement, while **250.000** workers of the garment and footwear sector lost their jobs due to the military coup.

The military continued to carry out workplaces, and door-to-door searches in hostels and in workers' homes. Company managers still today provide telephones, addresses and photos of union leaders to both military and police.

Factories announced a pre-employment warning, that workers would be fired if they join union or participate in union/ labour support activities. After the first months closure many companies when reopening clearly stated they will not hire labor activists, all Workers need to work excessive hours and during Sunday or in official holidays, without receiving overtime salary, as foreseen in the labour laws, nor they are provided with any paid leave to workers who joined the CDM.

All collective agreements have been cancelled, and social dialogue is not possible since trade unions are banned. Workers have no employment contracts. The Mandalay and the 6 Yangon industrial zones continue to be subject to **martial law** with judicial power transferred to the military. In many factories, wages payment were delayed, with the excuse of political instability and impossibility to withdraw cash from banks. Child laborers are also being recruited. Salaries are below the minimum wage fixed by the law and negotiated with trade unions and employers' organizations.

Despite COVID-19 third wave, many factories have no protective measures, and workers have to do their job without PPE, or masks, or safety equipment's. In many Chinese companies, working for international brands workers, are not recognized as permanent workers after three probation months. Most factories requested the presence of the military or police in front of their gates, to threaten workers, who are frightened while entering the working places. The reality is that most Myanmar employers are using the dictatorship to cut all the labor rights, foreseen by the law and the international human and labour standards. No means can prevent the military from targeting, arresting, torturing, or killing trade unionists or workers cooperating with trade unions in reporting about violations of labour rights and laws in the factories.

It is clear that after one year of deep violation of fundamental labor rights, brands and foreign companies, are not in the position to respect the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human rights and the OECD Guidelines on multinationals. They cannot grant the due diligence, due to the lack of one of the fundamental conditions, which is freedom of association and collective bargaining. For this reason, in the impossibility to grant the respect of fundamental workers rights, the IWFM called on brands to withdraw from Myanmar, and to the EU to suspend the EBA facilitations to avoid that the military can profit from the

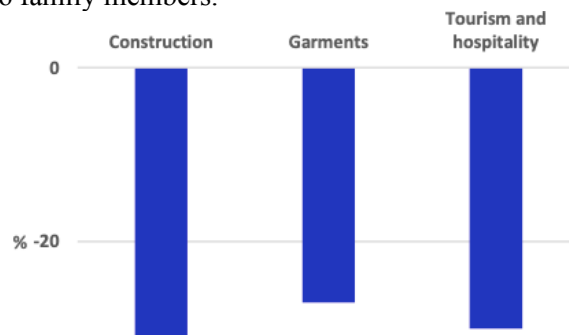
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<sup>10</sup> Myanmar coup: The doctors and nurses defying the military By Jonathan Head South East Asia correspondent Published 7 January



exports to the EU. Despite a similar call by the European Parliament resolution of the 7th of October 2021, the EU is still strongly opposed with the EBA suspension, arguing it would affect workers and not the military. It should be to be reminded that The GSP is part of the EU's trade policy tool box, with development objectives, which has been in place since 1971. Under the GSP Regulation, EBA preferences provide LDCs with duty-free, quota-free access to the EU market for all products except arms and ammunition. Such preferences are conditional upon the beneficiary country respecting the principles of 15 core United Nations (UN) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions on human rights and labor rights. Article 19 of the GSP Regulation spells out that the preferential tariffs may be withdrawn temporarily, in respect of all or of certain products originating in a beneficiary country. Following the Eu procedures, in 2020, after a verification started on 11 February 2019, the EU suspended the EBA to Cambodia<sup>11</sup> for the violation of principles laid down in human and labor rights UN/ILO conventions<sup>12</sup>.

According to the ILO rapid impact assessment of the labor market<sup>13</sup>, *in the first half of 2021, an estimated 14% of working hours were lost, which is equivalent to the working time of at least 2.2 million full-time workers, according to a new recent ILO report, estimates indicate that total working hours decreased in 2021 by 18 percent in comparison with 2020, and by 30 percent in comparison with 2019. More than 1.6 million workers lost their jobs in comparison with 2020. Agriculture, half of the country's employment, was heavily impacted as well as the construction sector, losing 350.000 jobs. According to a SMART survey, although 68% have an employment contract, there is increased use of casual/day labor and piece-rate hiring. Workers are suffering from rising inflation caused by an approximate 50% devaluation of the Myanmar Kyat (now Feb. 2022 inflation reached 60%) and are less able to send remittances to family members.*



<sup>11</sup> COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) 2020/550 of 12 February 2020 amending Annexes II and IV to Regulation (EU) No 978/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the temporary withdrawal of the arrangements referred to in Article 1(2) of Regulation (EU) No 978/2012 in respect of certain products originating in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

<sup>12</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) ('ICCPR'); — Convention concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, No 87 (1948) ('ILO Convention 87'); — Convention concerning the Application of the Principles of the Right to Organise and to Bargain Collectively, No 98 (1949) ('ILO Convention 98'); and — International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (1966) ('ICESCR').

<sup>13</sup> [Employment in Myanmar since the military takeover: A rapid impact assessment](#), ILO Brief, July 2021

Decrease in employment in highly impacted sectors, 2021 (year-on-year percentage change)

Since February 2021 nearly 28 big multinationals left the country or temporarily suspended their activities due to the military coup. Among them the Amata Corporation, (construction sector); Telenor; Electricite de France; Petronas; Sembcorp, Woodside V Power group, Moattama Gas Transportation Company Ltd; Myanmar Metal; Toyota; Suzuki; Adani Ports and Special Econ. Zones; Metro etc.

Now, after one year the Labor Alliance and the CTUM within it, are playing a central role in the democratic opposition movement. They are represented in the National Unity Consultative Council, made up of 28 democratic organizations including the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw CRPH), the interim National Unity Government (NUG), EAOs and ethnic political parties, Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) groups, general strike councils, and civil society organizations. The NUCC drafted the Federal Democracy Charter, through a consensus-based approach and is finalizing the new Federal Democratic Constitution, which includes a specific paragraph on labor rights, social dialogue, etc. In the first online People Assembly meeting, among the People Assembly the Conference Presidium, Phyo Sandar Soe, Deputy Secretary-General of CTUM, and in the representation of the Labor Alliance was nominated in the Presidium and read the NUCC and NUG endorsement of the PA.

In January 2022 a coalition of 200 organizations, led by the Myanmar Labour Alliance, including workers, farmers, students, teachers, medical professionals, lawyers, youth, and women organizations requested to the international institutions and governments to adopt Comprehensive Economic Sanctions. *“The requested Comprehensive Economic Sanction calls for the stopping of international financial services (international bank transfers and bank credits), stopping the insurance and reinsurance services, effectively stopping arms and weapon selling and related support goods trading and dealing, oil and gas exploring, excavation, exporting and trading of natural resources of Myanmar such as gems, woods and other forest products”.*

It is very difficult to predict which is the possible way out. For sure, the wait and see strategy has brought no results. A new strategic approach, made up by a clear diplomatic initiative by the so called “likeminded countries” should open a discussion table between the main international actors and the National Unity Government. This should be accompanied by a strong economic and political restrictive measure action. Only innovating and acting with courage international institutions and governments could pave the way for the implementation of the already weak ASEAN 5 point consensus, approved by ASEAN on April 2021.

What is clear is that, after one year, the military coup does not have any chance to strengthen itself to rule the country for other 50 years.

