

Politicians representing pro-election parties have expressed support for the “Kale Declaration” made by ethnic leaders and politicians opposed to the Nov. 7 election in Kale, Sagaing Division on Sunday.

The declaration called for a federal system based on equality and democracy to be established through a second Panglong conference.

Speaking to *The Irrawaddy* on Tuesday, Aye Maung, chairman of the Rakhine (Arakan) Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) said that the goal of their parties is based on the original 1947 Panglong agreement that led to the independence of Burma from Britain.

“We support their call [for a Panglong-type conference] and all the ethnic groups should negotiate. It is time to compromise peacefully,” said Aye Maung, adding that ethnic political parties competing in the coming election welcomed the statement.

Though the aims of the statement are similar to the three aims of the military government—non disintegration of the union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty—whether the military government will cooperate with the ethnic groups is questionable, said an observer.

Thu Wai, chairman of the Rangoon-based Democratic Party, said a meeting based on reconciliation is important for political progress in the country but it would be of little use if participants did not follow up an agreement with appropriate action.

“If the government is serious about resolving ethnic issues, it must first stop fighting [the ethnic groups] and should call for a general cease-fire,” Thu Wai said, adding that the attitude of the military government was key to the significance of the Kale Declaration.

The declaration, which expressed support for leading members of the National League for Democracy, said the upcoming election held on the basis of the 2008 Constitution cannot create

anything that leads to national reconciliation. The declaration calls for an end to dictatorship, respect for human rights and democracy for the people.

“Although we disagree with the 2008 Constitution, we can no more stop it than the politicians who participated in the 1990 election could stop the national convention that created it,” said Aye Maung.

“In fact, we [RNDP] have the same goal [as the Kale group], but we want to reach it in a different way using a path of moderation through the election,” he said.