

WASHINGTON — UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Monday urged the junta to turn the Burmese election into a new beginning for the country and its people.



He said the authorities must demonstrate that the election is part of a credible transition towards a democratic government, national reconciliation and respect for human rights, said a statement issued by Ban's office.

Ban also urged the junta to release all remaining political prisoners and lift restrictions on Aung San Suu Kyi so that they can freely participate in the political life of the country.

Ban urged the Burmese authorities to ensure the process of forming new institutions of government is as broad-based and inclusive as possible and called for renewed dialogue among all stakeholders as part of any process of national reconciliation.

The international community will look to the Burmese authorities to provide greater assurances that the current process marks a genuine departure from the status quo, he said.

"The Secretary-General reaffirms the United Nations' commitment to work with the government and people of Myanmar [Burma] to help them achieve such a transformation," the statement said.

At the same time, Ban expressed concern about reports of outbreaks of fighting in some ethnic areas and urged all sides to refrain from any action that could raise tensions or create instability at this time.

Meanwhile, six Nobel Peace laureates have expressed disappointment over the general elections in Burma and said that the conditions under which they took place made clear that the elections were a means by which to entrench military rule and legitimize an undemocratic

constitution.

“We call on the UN secretary general and all states to condemn the undemocratic constitution of Burma and the flawed elections. We call on the government of Burma to respect the human rights of the people of Burma and to unconditionally release all political prisoners and to immediately cease hostilities against ethnic nationalities,” said a statement by the Nobel Women’s Initiative.

The statement said that the election procedures were not in accordance with international standards and prevented the exercise of fundamental freedoms and political rights.

“Election laws barred a number of political parties and candidates from running, either by disqualifying them or making it nearly impossible for candidates to participate. Over 1.5 million citizens, internally displaced or part of ethnic nationalities struggling against the government, were prevented from voting. Journalists and observers were banned,” the statement said.

“The people of Burma are ready for change—real change. Now is the time for the international community to support them in making that change.” The Nobel Women’s Initiative was established in 2006 by sister Nobel Peace laureates Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Wangari Maathai, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan Maguire.

Responding to question at a daily briefing held at UN headquarters in New York, spokesman Martin Nesirky said Ban believes the Burmese authorities now have a responsibility to demonstrate that the ballot is part of a credible transition towards a democratic government, national reconciliation and respect for human rights, to which all parties and citizens can contribute.

Asked whether a UN Commission of Inquiry is needed for Burma, Nesirky said that the idea came from a proposal by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights situation in Burma to the Human Rights Council. This is part of an independent process for member states to consider, he said.