Workshop Statement on the Right to Information in Myanmar

We, civil society participants from the Better Life Organization, Centre for Law and Democracy, Creative Home, the Enabling Legal Environment Working Group (Upper Myanmar and Lower Myanmar), the Food Security Working Group (FSWG), Local Resource Centre, the National NGO Network (3N), Royal Araryarwaddy, Tamar Yeik Women’s Empowerment Group, the Women’s Organization Network and the YOUTH Social Network, having assembled in Yangon, Myanmar, on 12 November 2014:

Noting the importance for citizens of having guaranteed access to information, in order to ensure meaningful participation on issues of public importance;

Aware that the creation of a more accountable and responsive government is a critical part of Myanmar’s ongoing democratic reforms;

Stressing the importance of civil society engagement and consultation in the development of a strong right to information in Myanmar;
Stressing that progress towards democratisation is a fragile thing, which can be undermined if forward momentum falters;

Aware that the right to information is a key prerequisite for a healthy participatory democracy, and is important for advancing a range of important advocacy issues including women’s rights, the promotion of media development, environmental rights, land rights, labour rights and the promotion of economic development;

Adopt the following Statement on the importance of the right to information for Myanmar’s democratic transition:

The right to information is of fundamental importance as a human right, and has many benefits, including in combating corruption, promoting sound development, enhancing participatory government, promoting public accountability and generating respect for human rights and the dignity of the people.
Over the past few years, Myanmar has taken important steps towards democratisation, but the country still has a long way to go in improving governance, transparency and accountability.

Myanmar should establish legal framework for the right to information through a consultative process with key stakeholders, including journalists and civil society.

We commit to working collaboratively together to achieve these goals, and we urge Myanmar’s government to engage constructively with civil society to create and implement a strong right to information.

Signed:
Michael Karanicolas
Centre for Law and Democracy

Nyi Nyi Aung
Local Resource Centre
Enabling Legal Environment Working Group (Lower Myanmar)

Ma Khin Lay
Women Organization Network
Enabling Legal Environment Working Group (Lower Myanmar)

Ma Nwezin Win
National NGO Network (3N)
Enabling Legal Environment Working Group (Lower Myanmar)

Aung Thu
Better Life Organization
Enabling Legal Environment Working Group (Lower Myanmar)

Myint Htun
Royal Aryarwaddy YOUTH Social Network
Enabling Legal Environment Working Group (Upper Myanmar)

Khin Nilar Mya
Tamar Yeik Women Empowerment Group
Enabling Legal Environment Working Group (Upper Myanmar)

Thet Oo
Food Security Working Group (FSWG)
Agricultural Technology Development Foundation

Ye Wint Hlaing
Creative Home
Enabling Legal Environment Working Group (Lower Myanmar)

Oo Kyaw Thein
Lawyer