

Ethical Investment and Labelling

This Union Notes:

Union notes:

A) Burma

1. Burma is ruled by a brutal military regime, which massacred 3,000-10,000 peaceful demonstrators, including many students, in 1988.
2. The regime uses millions of men, women and children as forced labour. Much of this forced labour takes place to develop tourism infrastructure and to attract foreign investment from a range of international companies.
3. There are around 1,500 political prisoners in Burma, living in poor conditions –torture and solitary confinement are commonplace. Many of these prisoners are students.
4. Students' Unions are banned in Burma.
5. Min Ko Naing, the President of the Students' Union, Burma, has been in solitary confinement in Burma since 1989 for his part in helping to organise the popular peaceful demonstrations in 1988. He is an inspiration to Burmese democracy activists around the world, and to many other people working for human rights and democracy.
6. The brutal military regime in Burma actively encourages tourism, as it provides the vital funds for the country's current dictatorship.
7. Thousands of adults and families have been relocated in order to make way for the construction of restaurants, hotels, and cultural attractions without any compensation or valid alternative land offered.
8. All profits made on any money exchanged in the country, or money spent in government owned attractions or guest houses (most of them are government owned or leased) goes to funding the regime. The regime already spends 40% of its GDP on arms, despite not being in external conflict with any other countries.

9. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (the democratically-elected leader of Burma, who has not been allowed to take power, and who has been placed under house arrest 3 times by the junta) has been active in speaking out against the regime's use of tourism to gain credibility and funds. She has asked tourists not to go to the country until the military regime relinquishes power.
10. Burma is a land with considerable natural resources including minerals (lead, zinc, copper, tin), precious stones (pearls, rubies), timber (predominantly teak), oil and natural gas. Money from these activities supports the military regime. Without international companies' support this revenue would be severely reduced.

B) Darfur

1. Decades of drought, desertification and overpopulation have led to severe conflict in western Sudan, which began in February 2003.
2. It is a tribal conflict, one side consisting of Sudanese military and Janjaweed, a militia group, and the other of a variety of rebel groups including the Sudan Liberation Movement.
3. The Sudanese government publicly denies supporting the Janjaweed, but has provided money and assistance to the militia.
4. The United Nations estimates up to 450,000 people have died from violence or disease related to the conflict. The Sudanese government claims 9,000 have died. Around 2.5 million have been displaced.
5. The pressure group Human Rights Watch claim the Sudanese government suppresses information by interfering with witnesses and tampering with evidence.
6. The mass media describe the conflict as 'ethnic cleansing' and 'genocide', and the US government states it is genocide.
7. In March 2007 the United Nations envoy accused the Sudanese government of 'gross violations' and called for urgent international action to protect civilians there.

C) Global context

1. Sudan and Darfur are only two of many situations where foreign investment from international companies is allowing students and other global citizens to be suppressed and eradicated.
2. Environmental impacts from international companies are often causes of major hardship and death in populations around the world.

This Union Believes:

A) Burma

1. Foreign investment in Burma has:
 - I. Fuelled a brutal military dictatorship, which spends nearly half its budget on arms, allowing it to double the size of its army and continue its repression of the Burmese people, and commit ethnic genocide.
 - II. Not improved the welfare of Burma's people; instead it has directly contributed to human rights abuses, especially forced labour and mass displacement, perpetrated by their oppressors.
 - III. Allowed for the postponement of urgent economic and political reform.
 - IV. Continued against the wishes of the democratically elected National League for Democracy, led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who have called for economic sanctions.
 - V. Given legitimacy and a voice for the military government.
2. The ruling regime in Burma must be weakened via international pressure in order that they may be removed by the Burmese people.

B) Darfur

1. Foreign investment supports the actions of the Sudanese government against their people.

C) Global

1. The 'bottom line' of profit is what drives companies and thus economic sanctions against companies are a major tool in protecting the disempowered majority of the world's population.
2. Boycotts work at one level, but actively educating members about the product choices they make may lead to personal boycotts that will extend beyond campus life.
3. The Union should be actively engaged in highlighting and safeguarding the human rights of people without voices throughout the world.

This Union Resolves:

A) Burma

1. To stop all sales of package tours and direct flights to Burma.
2. To inform all travel shop staff about the decision and provide them with information on the issue.
3. To not directly invest in or accept advertising from the following companies due to their continued support for the Burmese regime;
 - i. Premier Oil, UK.
 - ii. Triumph, Switzerland.
 - iii. Suzuki, Japan.
 - iv. Mitsubishi Corp., Japan.
 - v. Mitsui & Co., Japan.
 - vi. Total Elf Fina / Unocal, France / US.
 - vii. Marriott, US.
 - viii. Sea Containers (Orient Express), US.
4. To lobby the university to have active policy to do the same.

B) Darfur

- i. To not directly invest in or accept advertising from the following companies which have been identified by the Sudan Divestment

Task Force as having a close relationship with the government and that do not provide benefits for the general population of Sudan:

- i. China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC)
- ii. Petroleum Nasional Berhad (Petronas)
- iii. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC)
- iv. China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec group)
- v. Lundin Petroleum
- vi. AREF Investment Group
- vii. Muhibbah Engineering Berhad
- viii. Kencana Petroleum Berhad (KSTB)
- ix. Petrofac
- x. PECD Berhad
- xi. Weatherford International Limited
- xii. Wartsila OYJ
- xiii. Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited
- xiv. Harbin Power Equipment Company Limited
- xv. Alstom
- xvi. Avichina Industry and Technology Company
- xvii. Dongfeng Automobile Company Limited
- xviii. Mitsui Engineering and Shipbuilding Company Limited
- xix. Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)
- xx. Scomi Group Berhad
- xxi. Weir Group PLC
- xxii. Electricity Generating Company (EGCO)

2. To lobby the university to have active policy to do the same.

C) Global

1. To set up a working group to develop the Union's 'Ethical Investment, Advertising and Labelling' policy further.

D) Labelling

1. To begin a process of 'Ethical Labelling' on products for sale in Union Outlets, using the model of 'The Good Shopping Guide', and indicating an ethical rating of products with a simple traffic lights system (or similar).
2. To have more detailed information in a leaflet for some products, which will be regularly varied and prepared by the 'Ethical Investment, Advertising and Labelling' Working Group.