

## Press Release- Some Karens sheltered in Thailand return home

February 5, 2010, 7:20 pm

In response to queries regarding media reports on the repatriation of a group of Karens sheltering in Thailand back to Myanmar, Ms. Vimon Kidchob, Director-General of Information and Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman reaffirmed Friday that Thailand remains committed to humanitarian and human rights principles.

“There have been reports alluding to the return of some members of the group to their areas of origin this morning”, she said. The group in question came to Thailand last June but now that the situation in their areas of origin has returned to normal, some members of the group wish to return home. She further noted that three families returned voluntarily this morning without any involvement of the Thai authorities. Others who still wish to return will be allowed to do so at a later stage at their own choice.

The spokeswoman added that the authorities involved have always been open and transparent in the treatment of the Karens, allowing a number of foreign countries, NGOs, as well as international organizations, including the UNHCR, open access to the group. Various such representatives have talked to the Karen families in recent days and have been present at the site throughout the day to observe developments.

The spokeswoman reiterated that the Thai authorities are not forcing the Karens to take any decision one way or the other. “Thailand has and will always uphold the traditions of providing humanitarian assistance to those in need with full respect for humanitarian and human rights principles”, she said.