

ASEAN leaders sign charter

by UPI

SINGAPORE -- Leaders of a 10-member Southeast Asian group including Myanmar Tuesday signed a charter in Singapore that calls for setting up a human rights body. The charter is the first such legal document binding the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations since it was established 40 years ago. ASEAN leaders are in Singapore for a summit. The charter said the group will rely on peaceful settlement of disputes with non-interference in the internal affairs of ASEAN member states, Xinhua reported. Any member violating its rule will be referred to the group's leaders but will not face expulsion or sanctions. The charter said the ASEAN Summit will be the supreme policy-making body. The group's members are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, who attended the meeting, met with Premier Thein Sein of Myanmar, formerly Burma, and informed him China is deeply concerned about the Myanmar situation, China Daily reported. Since the military junta's brutal crackdown in September on pro-democracy protesters, China and some ASEAN countries have been criticized for not supporting sanctions. The Voice of America quoted U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab as saying ASEAN members cannot go on with business as usual while Myanmar fails to enact reforms.

Copyright © 2007, by United Press International. All Rights Reserved.

ASEAN leaders sign charter by UPI