



MYANMAR

STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY U WUNNA MAUNG LWIN
UNION MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
AT THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

Geneva, 13 September 2011

Check against delivery

Madame President

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Delegation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, may I, first of all, congratulate Your Excellency Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre, Permanent Representative and Ambassador of Uruguay, on your assumption of the Presidency of the United Nations Human Rights Council. I am confident that the Human Rights Council will achieve greater success under the wise and able leadership of the President.

May I also convey our warm greetings and best wishes to Her Excellency Madame Navi Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Madame President,

Today, I am here in your midst to highlight the importance that the Government of Myanmar attaches to the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

As you are well aware, a constitutional government has been formed recently in Myanmar. In his inaugural speech, the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar outlined the policies and objectives of the new government with a view to building a modern and democratic nation. The priorities of the new Government are to achieve good governance, clean government, fundamental rights of the citizens, rule of law, transparency, accountability, fight against corruption, reduction of income disparity, creation of a harmonious society, economic reform and environmental conservation.

Immediately after its formation, the Government has begun launching a series of economic, social and policy reforms to improve the socio-economic life of the people.

Madame President,

The first step in the implementation of these reforms is the adoption of the National Rural Development and Poverty Reduction Plan in eight priority areas. The President has instructed eight government ministries to implement the national action plan. After the successful implementation of this plan, the current poverty rate of 26 per cent is expected to drop to 16 per cent by the year 2014-15 in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

One of the bold steps taken by the Government for the welfare of the people is the increase in pension allowances for retired service personnel, commensurate with the changing economic and social conditions of the country. As a result, over 815,000 retired service personnel are now benefiting from this measure.

With the aim of energizing the country's export trade, commercial tax on export goods has recently been reduced from 8 per cent to 2 per cent. In addition, all agricultural and timber export products are now tax-exempted to significantly boost our external trade.

Regarding the micro-finance scheme, the Government has been providing loans up to the village level so as to expand comparable growth between rural and urban areas. Due to this initiative, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) throughout the country will achieve considerable progress in the years ahead. These structural adjustment programmes in the economic and financial sectors are already making their impact within the short period of time.

Madame President,

Let me now turn to the promotion and protection of human rights in my country. As a conscientious member of the community of nations, Myanmar has been working closely with the United Nations and the international community in promoting and protecting human rights of its people. As in the state constitutions of other countries, the promotion and protection of human rights, is fully guaranteed in Chapter VIII of our own State Constitution.

Madame President,

While talking about the promotion and protection of human rights in my country, I would also like to touch briefly on our efforts to promote rights of our workers. Efforts by the new government to enable our workers to enjoy their rights in line with international labour standards are now bearing fruit. The Labour Organisations Bill, drafted with the assistance of ILO, was approved by the Amyotha Hluttaw (House of Nationalities) on 29 August 2011. The bill is now under submission to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) for its adoption. It is expected that this bill will soon be made into law, in accordance with Section 24 of the State Constitution.

Likewise, the Ward or Village-tract Administration Bill is now before the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament). This bill, when promulgated as law, will effectively contribute to Myanmar's efforts in eliminating the practice of forced labour in the country.

Madame President,

Human rights situation in Myanmar was reviewed by the Human Rights Council's UPR Working Group last January.

During the Working Group session, 57 countries contributed 190 recommendations on the human rights situation in Myanmar. Out of these, 74 recommendations enjoyed our instant acceptance while 46 recommendations were brought back to the Capital for further consideration. Seventy recommendations did not enjoy our support.

At the Plenary of the 17th session of the HRC last June, Myanmar agreed to accept four additional recommendations out of the 46 recommendations following their consideration at the Capital. The remaining 42 recommendations received either a partial acceptance or no acceptance at all. It was so, because of the intrusive language and the ambiguous nature of those recommendations.

Madame President,

Myanmar is now on track, taking necessary measures to become a State Party to some international core human rights instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

In my view, the UPR process is the most dependable and uncontroversial monitoring mechanism to address and ratify the human rights situation of all countries. As such, I firmly believe that country-specific mandates and resolutions are no longer desired or required in the Council.

Madame President,

In order to effectively promote and protect human rights of its citizens, Myanmar established the National Human Rights Commission on 5 September 2011. The National Commission is composed of independent experts from all strata of life; they are well respected by the community they represent. Citizens who assume that their rights are violated could freely file their complaints to the Commission. Upon receiving a complaint, the Commission will investigate it and the findings will be transmitted to the concerned authorities for redress. The Commission will submit its annual report directly to the President of the Republic. Standing itself as an independent human rights entity, the Commission, while striving to promote and protect human rights in the domestic context, will also actively cooperate with international organizations such as the United Nations, the Human Rights Council, and other regional groupings.

Madame President,

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is vested by the State Constitution with the authority to grant amnesties. The President had exercised his authority for the first time by issuing an amnesty order on 16 May 2011 commuting death sentences to life imprisonment and reducing other prison

terms by one year. As a result, approximately 20,000 inmates from prisons and labour camps were released till the end of July 2011.

As a gesture of our renewed cooperation with the ICRC (The International Committee of the Red Cross), the latter has been permitted access to the prisons with a view to upgrading water and sanitation facilities there.

Madame President,

Reaffirming our commitment to the ongoing cooperation with the international community including the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Mr. Tomas Ojea Quintana, visited Myanmar from 21 to 25 of August 2011, his fourth visit, at the invitation of the Government. During the visit, he was able to observe the parliament (Hluttaws) in session and meet with high-ranking government officials and other stakeholders. He was also received by the Hluttaws (Parliaments) Speakers, the Chief Justice, the Union Ministers, the Union Attorney-General, the Chairman of the Election Commission, the Deputy Chief of Police, the Advisory Group to the President, and the parliamentarians. He met privately with seven prisoners at Insein Prison at his request.

At the press conference concluding his visit, Mr. Quintana stated that the visit was very productive and that the Government's efforts should be encouraged by the international community.

Myanmar will continue to work closely with the Special Rapporteur in promoting and protecting human rights in the country. At the same time, Myanmar earnestly hopes that the Special Rapporteur would report his findings back to the United Nations based on the principles of objectivity, impartiality, non-selectivity and constructive dialogue which are clearly stipulated in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006.

Madame President,

With regard to the national reconsolidation, the President of the Republic has clearly stated that those who truly wish to serve the interest of the State and the people must participate in the political process by contesting elections in accordance with the Constitution, setting aside differences. The parliament (Hluttaw) is the only appropriate venue to discuss the future of the nation and its people.

The Government, expressing its magnanimity and genuine goodwill for national reconsolidation, has asserted that the door of peace is being kept open. It is determined to pursue a peaceful resolution of differences with the national race armed groups.

Recently, Union Minister U Aung Kyi and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met twice. They discussed the rule of law, elimination of disagreement and serving national interest. They reached agreement to cooperate in pursuing the stability of the State and the national development to fulfill the actual needs and desire of the entire people, for the flourishing of democracy, and ensuring of economic and social development of the country.

The President himself met Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 19 August and they discussed to find out potential common grounds for cooperation in the interest of the nation and the people, setting aside different views.

Madame President,

Myanmar today has entered a new era. The new constitutional government is pursuing the national goal of building a modern, developed and democratic nation. Progress in the political, economic and social sectors of the country will be incremental, systematic and dynamic. Myanmar is changing, and changing for real progress. In the transformational process, Myanmar will not be immune from various challenges. At this important juncture, the international community can best assist us by providing necessary encouragement and support.

I thank you Madame President.
