

Mr. President, Special Rapporteur,

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

We would like to thank the SR Tomás Ojea Quintana for the presentation of his progress report to the Human Rights Council.

Slovakia views the developments of the Myanmar's human rights situation with a cautious optimism. Nevertheless, too many concerns need to be addressed, as a matter of urgency. We look forward to the upcoming by-elections of April 2012 as a key test of the path the authorities decide to take. Myanmar finds itself at a very unique juncture as far as its demonstrated commitment to pursue efforts that might lead to a greater respect to the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We welcome the willingness expressed by the Special Rapporteur to stand ready to assist constructively and cooperatively in this direction, hence, at this important stage, Slovakia finds imperative the continuation of the mandate.

As a demonstration of the Government's determination, Slovakia reiterates, as a basic prerequisite, the need to release, immediately and unconditionally, all remaining prisoners of conscience. The rights of those that have not been convicted with credible criminal charges should be fully restored. The necessary safeguards should be expeditiously put in place to prevent torture and other forms of ill-treatment. The situation in prisons and detention centres needs to be addressed as well to comply with international standards.

We call upon the Government of Myanmar to speed up legislative reforms, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society's representatives, as well as all ethnic, marginalized and vulnerable groups, in particular in the area of the freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, in line with the country's international obligations, repealing, as a matter of priority, all provisions in contradiction.

Mr. Special Rapporteur, we fully concur with your recommendation that justice and accountability, conducted in an independent, impartial and credible manner, including measures to ensure access to the truth, are fundamental for national reconciliation and democratic transition.

Mr. Special Rapporteur, Slovakia would appreciate if you could highlight the core actions you consider to undertake in the months to come as well as some concrete areas you see the international community's assistance indispensable.

Thank you, Mr. President.