Message from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to the rally to welcome and support the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong

27th January, 2018

Following is the unofficial translation of the message.

I send my good wishes for peace of mind to our citizens, representatives, honored guests, members of the ceremony organizing committee, those who gave assistance the ceremony, all those who have the same desire for peace, all of you who have come to this event to support the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong

I am confident that this rally would be over flowing with the hopes and dreams of our people who love and value peace. This rally has expressed our loyalty to our patriots who were not able to enjoy internal peace, our sympathy to victims of armed conflicts in our country and our "metta" which wishes to remove bad legacies and pass down good legacies for our future generations.

In our country, armed conflicts have occurred for nearly 70 years. Efforts were made to bring peace to the country in successive eras. While taking lessons from failures due to some reasons, we must write a new chapter of our history of our era with collective efforts.

Support from the people and their active participation are sine qua non for bringing peace to our country. Peace cannot be achieved without the participation of all communities. Achieving sustainable peace is meant the development of a country and the first step towards a Democratic Federal Republic that we have all aspired for, for decades.

Peace is not just for an individual, for an organization and for an ethnic group, but for the whole Union. Peace is for security and safety of the lives of our brethren who have been residing in the country through thick and thin. Peace is a priceless jewel. To achieve this peace, we must work hard with strong desire, with relentless efforts, with strong spirit and with the wisdom to distinguish right from wrong. To prevent our country from being deprived of democracy and human rights and not to become a Union where people are not happy due to lack of peace, we must work hard with the above four mindsets. My special thank goes to those who volunteered for this rally which bring pride to our country, democratic forces which have struggled for democracy amidst obstacles and challenges and the people who support us so that we would not deviate from our path to peace.

Let me conclude my message while urging the people to cooperate with us so that we can make our own history of efforts for peace of the Union with dignity and bravery to march towards our common goal of a Democratic Federal Republic while maintaining mutual friendship, mutual respect and mutual cooperation. ■

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker opens peace event in Yangon

Htin Paw Win (Kamayut)

AN entertainment show featuring musical entertainment and a "Stop Hate, Spread Love" football match attended by people from all walks of life was held yesterday afternoon at Yangon Thuwunna Stadium in support of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong.

After the initial entertainment programmes, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint read a message from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. (The complete text of the message appears separately).

Event organising committee member and 88 Generation student leader U Min Ko Naing then explained the aim of the event that he described as "held by the people and the people who were dutiful throughout history".

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint reads State Counsellor's message at the event in Thuwunna Stadium in support of the Union Peace Conference –21st Century Panglong. **PHOTO: TIN SOE (MYANMA ALIN)**

"They want peace, and there is no one among the armed organisations of our country that rejects peace", he said.

This was followed by more entertainment programmes that included performances of students from Basic Education Middle School No. (2) Thingangyun, in addition to actors, actresses and artists, after which blue-and-white balloons fashioned into the shape of a peace symbol were released.

A football match between the Stop Hate Team and the Spread Love Team that included former political prisoners, former Myanmar footballers, actors and artists was then held. Before the start of the match, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, (Yangon) Region Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun, central executive committee member U Aung Soe greeted the players from both teams. After the match, the participants were presented with gifts. The day's event was attended by Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint, Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung, (Yangon) region ministers, Hluttaw representatives, artists and people from all segments of society. ■

Football players prepare to release peace dove shape hot air ballon at the peace event in Thuwunna Stadium, Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint and Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein greet football teams. **PHOTO: MNA**

28 JANUARY 2018
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Good friends are really needed!

PROGRAMS for repatriation of displaced people from Maungtaw region had already been made on the Myanmar side. With the firm determination to keep our pledges, we have constantly been implementing what we have to do, hence our readiness for accepting those who will come back, according to the agreement between Bangladesh and Myanmar. In spite of the fact that we are ready to implement the repatriation program as included in the agreement, there are delays on the other side, for some reasons.

Members of the advisory board for the Committee for implementation of recommendations on Rakhine State, staff from the secretariat and reporters from local and foreign media went to Maungtaw and Kyaukphyu regions in Raknine State to witness situations on the ground concerning the arrangement for the repatriation of returnees. The advisory board led by Professor Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, former deputy prime minister and foreign minister of Thailand, with experts from home and abroad as members, inspected the area for the first time since the formation of the advisory board on 14th December, 2017.

On the other hand, we feel sorry for those who went away with their backs toward us. They have proven themselves to be fair weather friends.

After attacks by extremist terrorists in Maungtaw on 25th August last year, efforts were being made for establishing stability, peace and rule of law in the region. At that time, a great number of displaced persons left for the neighboring country. At that time members of the international community and those who encouraged the displaced persons, claiming that they should be accepted urgently, tried to change their tune just at the present time when preparations for repatriating returnees systematically had already been made. We can now see signs and symptoms to put global pressure on Myanmar after labeling new titles, so that inconveniences and problems can be created.

The advisory board led by Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai had discussions with the State Counsellor on 22nd January and with Vice President U Myint Swe and party on 23rd January respectively, making a trip to Rakhine State on January 24 and 25 to study situations on the ground and to meet with the local people. During the meeting on 22 January, Governor Bill Richardson, a member of the advisory board went beyond the framework of the advisory board, focusing on his personal agenda and self-interests. And, there were false allegations concerning the advisory board in meeting with international media.

The affairs of Maungtaw, a part of Rakhine State are actually the affairs of our nation. Accordingly, we ourselves are required to perform the tasks of bringing about peace and stability of the region, security of the local people, and regional development. In doing so, we have to acquire suggestions and necessary assistance from good friends with correct understanding towards us. On the other hand, we feel sorry for those who went away with their backs toward us. They have proven themselves to be fair weather friends. ■

Sector of the National Ethnics among the National Reforms

By Htoo Htoo [Weibargi]

Kayin dance troupes perform traditional dance in Bago. **PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE**

Padaung women in Loikaw. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

BEING a country consisting of different national ethnics, every individual belonging to the above-said national ethnic groups living in Myanmar has equal rights of citizens and other rights granted by the Constitution to the full. Accordingly, the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw promulgated "Law Protecting Ethnic Rights," in 2015.

At the time when the incumbent government commenced to take office, there were slight reduction in forming the Ministries, but as the national unity is the most fundamental necessity in the Union of Myanmar, in which a variety of national ethnics are co-existing the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs had been formed as one of the Union-level Ministries to separately deal with ethnic affairs in accord with the "Law Protecting Ethnic Rights." Similarly, ministers for ethnic affairs had been assigned in Region and State Cabinets. By seeing these, we can be well convinced that the Government is laying great stress on the national unity, national reconciliation and internal peace.

At such a time when efforts are being made for acquiring the internal peace through the political round-table negotiations, the emergence of the Union-level Ministry which will focus the implementation of the benefits of the national ethnics will greatly help bringing armed conflicts to a complete end, bringing about the national peace and national reconciliation.

The Ministry has been learnt to have committed itself to accomplish the tasks for all the national ethnics to equally acquire all the citizen's rights, to eternally co-exist with loving kindness to each other, based on the genuine unity spirit, to maintain literature, art, cultures, traditions and customs of the ethnic people, national characteristics and historical heritages of the national races, to develop the national unity, mutual respect and support among each other, to bring about the multi-sector development such as health, education, economy and transport and to fully acquire the rights of national ethnics included in the Constitution.

Personnel from the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs are the staff working under various ministries, consisting of national races with different knowledge, experiences and educational backgrounds to enthusiastically contribute their physical and mental efforts for the development of the national races.

The Ministry had been set up with the Office of the Ministry, the Department of the Ethnic Literature and Culture and the Department of Protection for the Ethnic Rights. Just at a glimpse of these names obviously enough, the Ministry had been formed with a view to bringing about long-standing benefits of the national races.

The Office of the Union Minister is dealing with ethnic affairs, in consultation with other ministries, Region and State Governments, regional ministries, NGOs from home and abroad. Such performances as negotiation for opening branch offices of the department in Regions and States, conducting trainings on capacity building of youths, collection of professional advices by holding discussions on principles of conservation of ethnic national's literature and workshops on federalism, with the aids and supports of NGOs from home and abroad are being made.

Tasks for the emergence of national-level policy on languages under the aegis of UN and UNICEF are underway. With the contribution of voluntary labour of UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, governmental organizations in Regions and States, parliamentarians, civil societies and universities in cooperation, languages and literatures of ethnic national are going to develop very soon, to be of great help for their education.

In bringing about the benefits of ethnic nationals, operations are being made by linking with other ministries, region and state governments, global development institutions, ethnic literatures and cultural organizations and civil societies performing the tasks of regional development.

Department of ethnic literatures and cultures is performing the tasks of propagation of ethnic languages and literatures, acquisition of freedom to learn local people's languages and literatures, rights to freely publish periodicals in their own languages and conservation of ethnics and their languages which are on the brink of extinction.

It has been learnt that performances are to be carried out in cooperation with ministries, regional governments and ministries, NGOs, civil societies and donors from home and abroad, for achievement the multi-development such as education, health and socio-economic development and for the convenience of roads, bridges, electricity and drinking water in the regions where ethnics are residing.

Peace and dispute settlement supporting branch under the department of protection of ethnics' rights is to help the Union Government, Region and State Government and administrative bodies at different levels in the tasks of building up internal peace and regional peace, in cooperation with the respective organizations.

The Ministry will carry out the tasks of bringing about regional peace and stability, socio-economic development of ethnics, finding ways and means after making researches to get rid of difficulties on socio-economy, culture and literatures being experienced with the assistance of the Union Government and above-said organizations.

For national ethnics to acquire full rights of ethnics and opportunities as promulgated in the Law for Protection of Ethnics' Rights and for them to systematically exercise these rights and opportunities, by-laws are being drawn up, with the first draft discussed at the workshop held at the Royal President Hotelf r o m 31st January 2017 to 1st February 2017 and the second draft at the workshop held at Mingalar Thiri Hotel from 22nd June 2017 to 23rd June 2017.

In drawing up a by-law, responsible persons including ministers for ethnics' affairs in Regions and States, representatives from self-administered regions and Hluttaw Representatives and those from civil societies transparently took part in discussions. In by-law, Union-level and Region-and-State-level tribunals are formed, with the intention of hearing, trying and solving violation of ethnic rights. Upon completion of enactment of the by-law, it will be of great help for the national ethnics to get their rights and opportunities to the full, including freedom of worship, expression and choice to cultivate culture, arts, literature they like, provided that they do not go against rule of law, national security, rules and laws promulgated for keeping people's morality and ethics. And, they will come to have an access to research, creations, learning, conservation of their cultural heritages and etc.,.

The Ministry of Ethnic Affairs is opening Region and State Departments to implement policies, objectives and obligations of the Ministry, initially operating in Mon and Kayin States. Very soon, similar offices are to be opened in other regions and states. In appointing staff in those areas, local residents with the knowledge of respective languages are to be selected, it was learnt.

So as to wholeheartedly bring about objectives of the Ministry—conservation and up-gradation of literature and culture of ethnics, protection of their rights and socio-economic development of the national brethren by making the Union Spirit strong, good ideas, supports and cooperation are urgently needed from respective ministries, regional governments, international institutions, NGOs and civil societies from home and abroad, ethnic culture and literature associations, intellectuals and local populace. Then, it will be of great support for the emergence of the federal democratic union that the national ethnics greatly longed for. ■

Translated by
Khin Maung Oo

Four Objectives of the 71th Anniversary Union Day

1. To develop the Union Spirit
2. To make the internal peace process a success with unity of ethnic people
3. To build a Federal Democratic Union through the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong
4. To boost the economy of the Union by encouraging small and medium enterprises

WHO lauds Global Partnership to Stop Leprosy; will help renew efforts for zero leprosy

27 January 2018

NEW DELHI Welcoming the launch of the 'Global Partnership to Stop Leprosy', the World Health Organization today said a stronger force with a common vision was much needed to accelerate efforts to end leprosy.

"A collaborative approach by leading partners to address remaining challenges with innovative solutions, is expected to provide renewed energy and impetus to accelerate efforts against leprosy. This is a turning point, we must harness this energy to free the world of leprosy forever," said Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia, who also steers WHO's Global Leprosy Programme.

The new partnership, launched ahead of the World Leprosy Day 2018, brings together leading agencies and organizations working towards zero leprosy in various parts of the world. The partnership is expected to boost collaboration between national programmes, technical partners, academic sector, patient advocates and donors as it aims to support roll-out of global policy options, scale up interventions and mainstream leprosy under the aegis of universal health coverage.

The Global Partnership to Stop Leprosy is also expected to enhance implementation of WHO Global Leprosy Strategy 2016-2020 "Accelerating towards a leprosy-free world" which focuses on stronger political ownership, enhanced disease control and eliminating stigma and discrimination.

While globally, elimination of leprosy as a public health problem was achieved in 2000 with its prevalence reduced to less than one case per 10 000 population, every year on an average more than 200 000 new cases are reported. Though there is progress, it is very slow.

Advocating for enhancing efforts against leprosy, World Leprosy Day is observed on the last Sunday of January every year. This year, the day focuses on the critical target of zero leprosy-related disabilities in girls and boys by 2020.

In 2017 as many as 18 472 new child cases of leprosy were reported to the World Health Organization worldwide. These girls and boys must be diagnosed and given multidrug therapy (MDT), provided free of cost by WHO, before visible deformities and disabilities manifest. Dr Khetrapal Singh said, "disabilities inhibit development, limit life-long productivity and result in stigma and discrimination. Given the ongoing presence of deformities and disabilities among new cases of leprosy, including in girls and boys, decisive action must be taken to detect and treat cases earlier."

Reaching zero leprosy-related disabilities in children means tackling stigma and discrimination head-on, the Regional Director said, adding that fear of social exclusion continues to be a major cause of delay in diagnosis and treatment. It is, therefore, a major cause of deformity and disability.

"On World Leprosy Day this year we must reflect on and renew our focus on ending leprosy-related disabilities in girls and boys and on accelerating towards a leprosy-free world. We must renew our commitment to achieving a world where no child is left behind," Dr Khetrapal Singh said. The Global Partnership to Stop Leprosy makes us confident as together we will be able to move closer to a leprosy-free world.— *World Health Organization, South-East Asia Region* ■