



# MYANMAR

*Check against delivery*

**Statement**

**by**

**His Excellency U Wunna Maung Lwin**

**Union Minister for Foreign Affairs and Head of the Delegation of Myanmar**

**in the General Debate at the 70<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly**

**New York, 2 October 2015**

**Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. First of all, I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating Your Excellency for your election as the President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that your able leadership and diplomatic skills will steer our deliberations to a successful one. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

2. I would also like to commend the outstanding work of your predecessor His Excellency Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa at the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly.

**Mr. President,**

3. This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations. This historic occasion affords us the opportunity to reflect and look back the achievements of the World Organization. The United Nations was founded to safeguard international peace and security in order to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. The Organization deserves highest credit for its achievement in preventing the outbreak of another world war that plagues twice in the past. On the other hand, it is confronted with regional conflicts, rising tide of non-traditional threats and violent extremism. We need to do more to address these challenges, collectively.

4. There are also achievements in bringing better life for all. Lifting millions out of poverty, sending millions more children to schools, combating against deadly diseases, promoting gender equality and human rights are remarkable milestones in the UN's journey. The unanimous adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development last week has added to the long list of its achievements.

5. Still, daunting challenges remain. Colonial legacy with its inherited division influences today's conflicts across the world depriving many of economic and social development. The rising threats from terrorism and acts of violent extremism need to be addressed decisively. Climate change and environmental degradation is undermining the development and lives of the poor. Inequalities are widening, pushing the poor further behind.

6. Time is now opportune to do soul-searching on the future of the Organization and to strengthen our collective resolve to address the challenges of our time, particularly to advance its priorities, capacity and reform.

**Mr. President,**

7. Today's new and emerging challenges are increasingly questioning the effectiveness and efficiency of the Organization. While the cardinal principles of the UN Charter remains valid today, the world Organization founded seven decades ago needs to be reformed in conformity with the today's changing realities and drastic growth in membership. We believe that the UN Security Council also has to be reformed to make it more representative, efficient, transparent and to strengthen its capacity to better discharge its responsibilities to maintain international peace and security as entrusted by the Charter.

8. As part of the UN reform, we have set up the Human Rights Council in 2006 to redress the shortcomings of its predecessor, the Human Rights Commission. Yet, human rights issues are increasingly politicized and exploited. The principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity are at stake. Myanmar firmly believes that the Universal Periodic Review is the forum where promotion and protection human rights can be best addressed with objectivity and impartiality on an equal footing.

**Mr. President,**

9. The significant milestone of contribution Myanmar has ever made to the United Nations is providing the Organization with a Secretary-General. He served the Organisation from 1961 to 1971 at a difficult time of ideology contention, mistrust and security tensions among the nations. He played an important role in enhancing the security, expanding the organization's work on economic and social development in poor countries. The UN Development Program and the UN Environmental Program were also initiated. U Thant envisioned that UN "needed to meet the needs and hopes of people everywhere". This vision is more relevant than ever to the work of the organization and should be guiding us beyond UN at 70.

**Mr. President,**

10. During the tenure of the present government, Myanmar has stepped up to raise the profile of Myanmar in the field of disarmament. We have started with the signing of the IAEA Additional Protocol in September 2013. It was followed by Myanmar's ratification of the Biological Weapons Convention-BWC in December 2014 and the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention. These actions demonstrate Myanmar's dedicated commitments to the cause of disarmament.

11. Myanmar tables every year a resolution on Nuclear Disarmament adopted by the support of a great majority of the member states. The resolution reflects our firm

conviction that our world will be secured and safer without nuclear weapons. As the main sponsor of the resolution, we invite once again all member states to continue to support the resolution this year.

**Mr. President,**

12. Peacekeeping has been one of the most effective tools available to the United Nations to assist countries struggling on their difficult path from conflict to peace.

13. Today, the nature of conflicts is changing and becomes increasingly complex. We, therefore, welcome the Secretary-General's timely efforts to reviewing UN peace operations. At the same time, it is of paramount importance not to weaken the principles enshrined in the UN Charter as well as the cardinal principles of traditional peacekeeping of the United Nations.

**Mr. President,**

14. Fifteen years ago, we gathered here and committed ourselves to fight against poverty. We set ambitious Millennium Development Goals and targets. While we have lifted more than one billion people out of extreme poverty, some 800 million of people still excessively poor.

15. Myanmar has made notable progress in poverty and hunger reduction, eliminating gender disparity in basic education, reduction of child mortality rate, improving maternal health, and advancing global partnership for development.

16. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development this year will take over the unfinished business of the MDGs. Political commitment, enhanced partnership, strengthening of capacity and provision of adequate means of implementation will be keys to success in realizing ambitious SDGs. Unilateral economic sanctions imposed on developing countries will have a negative impact on their efforts for the people. It will also hinder in realizing the SDGs. We, therefore, call for early lifting of such measures.

17. The world is experiencing shifting patterns of rainfall and snow, rising temperature and heavy rainstorms. While we envisage a sustainable and resilient planet, scientific agencies agree that human activities are contributing to climate change.

18. This is time for translating commitments to action, not for arguing. It is crucial that the 2015 Paris Climate Conference reach a meaningful and universal Climate Change Agreement keeping global warming below 2 degree Celsius. It must also include obligations to provide least developed countries with adequate and additional financial and technological resources to help address the impacts of climate change.

**Mr. President,**

19. Migration definitely is not a new phenomenon. Myanmar shares the concerns expressed by many in this room about the migrating people in Europe and Asia. Saving lives on the journey, better legal migration policies, creating better opportunities at home and suppression of people smuggling and trafficking networks are essential in addressing illegal migration everywhere. We strongly believe that economic migration and human trafficking must be urgently addressed in a comprehensive manner.

20. Let me turn to the state of affairs in my home country Myanmar. Democratic reforms have started in 2011. The Government is now consolidating firm foundations for democracy. The reforms have widened democratic space, advanced economic performance and narrowed differences with the non-state armed groups.

21. New political culture of dialogue is rooted as Myanmar opened its door to different political forces since the early days of reforms. Amnesties were granted on several occasions allowing former prisoners to take part in nation building endeavours. Activists, media people, entrepreneurs and academicians living abroad have returned home. They are working hand in hand with the Government for a common goal of peaceful and prosperous Myanmar.

22. Unavoidably, there still are challenges typical to a young democracy. But we believe they are not insurmountable.

23. Economic sector reform has proven successful. Myanmar maintains average growth rate of 8% in four-year time. Myanmar is aiming at graduating from LDCs at an early date. It is feasible if we could maintain this average annual growth rate over the coming years. The Framework for Economic and Social Reforms (FESRs) launched in 2013 for sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction is a solid platform for our LDC graduation ambition. International Monetary Fund-IMF evaluated that economic prospects of Myanmar remain strong.

**Mr. President,**

24. Myanmar is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country where freedom of religion is guaranteed in its State Constitution. Buildings of different faiths are standing side by side across the country where different communities share same neighbourhood.

25. The situation in Rakhine State has changed. The government has managed not only to prevent any new violence but also started to promote culture of peace through Interfaith Dialogue and talks among communities and their leaders. Peace and stability has been restored.

26. As I speak, more than 20 different aid organizations are providing humanitarian and other assistance in Rakhine State. We thank the regional and international partners for their kind assistance to humanitarian, resettlement, reintegration and development needs.

27. The Interfaith Friendship Group in Myanmar has a nationwide set-up and composed of representatives from all faiths. The Group holds monthly meetings and conveys messages of peace and harmony to the public. They also make religious site visits and provide assistance to the needy as necessary. Various civil society organizations are also playing their part in bridging different communities.

28. Peace is a pre-requisite for national reconciliation and a cornerstone for building a new democratic society in Myanmar. Democracy will not flourish in the absence of peace. Without peace, economic development will not be sustained.

29. With this strong conviction, President U Thein Sein extended an olive branch to armed groups shortly after taking office with an aim to building sustainable and lasting peace in Myanmar.

30. Negotiations have been going on to determine the timing and modality to the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). The government, on its part, is fully prepared and patiently waiting for signature. We are hoping to sign the NCA in the very near future. Then, we will continue discussion over the framework for political dialogue.

31. We appreciate the interest and support of the international community to our peace process.

32. Promotion and protection of human rights has always been high on our agenda. Recent reforms in Myanmar contributed for our people to better enjoy fundamental human rights and freedom. The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission first established in 2011 was reconstituted in line with Paris Principles, following the enactment of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Law in 2014.

33. Widening the space for people to express their views and opinions has been one of the most visible developments in Myanmar. Greater media freedom has been granted in the country by abolishing press censorship, permitting publication of daily newspapers and weekly journals.

34. Myanmar has also made significant progress in expanding the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

35. Signing of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in July 2015 and the Optional Protocol to the Rights of the Child on the involvement of the children in armed conflict on 28 September 2015 is clear testimony of raising human rights standard in Myanmar.

**Mr. President,**

36. Myanmar has suffered a devastating natural disaster in late July and August in the wake of Cyclone Koman. The damage inflicted by the flood and landslides of torrential rains this year is more intense and widespread than that of the cyclone Nargis seven years ago. We appreciate friendly countries near and far, the United Nations and the international community for their kind assistance to the affected people.

**Mr. President,**

37. This year, 2015, is vital for Myanmar as we will be holding general elections on 8 November. The forthcoming elections will be transparent, free and fair. As such, the government is working together with local stakeholders and international partners.

**Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

38. Over the past four and a half years, we have been able to enhance peace, stability and rule of law and socio-economic development in the country. One may not be content with the pace of our reform process. However, it is undeniable that we have been able to create better political and socio-economic conditions, foster national reconciliation through culture of dialogue, and expand space for civil societies in nation building.

39. In closing, it is important to highlight that Myanmar's democratic reform process is gaining momentum and moving in the right direction. The international community should continue with its support to Myanmar in an objective and constructive manner. We shall remain fully committed and relentless in our effort to peace, democracy and inclusive socio-economic development for the people of Myanmar.

40. I thank you Mr. President.

\*\*\*\*\*