

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the occasion of the one Year Anniversary of the government (30 March 2017)

The following is the full text of State Counsellor's speech that was delivered on Thursday evening and broadcast from MRTV in Nay Pyi Taw.

To All the People of the Union,

A year ago on 30 March 2016, the NLD Government took over the responsibilities of the State with a clear mandate given by the people in the multi-party general elections held in November 2015. Accordingly, we have a bounden duty to be accountable to the people. The respective Ministries at the Union level and the States level have shared with you their work priorities, implementation of those priorities, the challenges that remain and future direction they will be pursuing in serving the interest of the people.

On my part, I would like to highlight three important matters. The first concerning “the change” that the NLD had promised in the campaign leading up to the elections. We need to review and assess how far we made good on that promise. When we say “change”, we are referring to two; “changing the system” and “changing mind-set”. Both the Government and people have to be on board to ensure the success of such changes. Neither the people nor the Government acting alone can bring about change and transformation we seek. The Government, of course, has the duty to take the lead to change the system.

When we speak of changing the system, we need to understand that it involves changing the old system that has been deeply entrenched in our society for over fifty years. In this regard, our main goal for the change is to demonstrate that the Government is here to serve the people. How people perceive our action – whether the Government is really serving the people or whether it is using the people to achieve its goals – is an important indicator to determine the measure of success. I believe most people are becoming increasingly aware that they do not have to live in fear of the Government anymore. I see this as progress. The Government is not to be feared but rather to be respected, valued, and trusted by the people. We will continue to strive to achieve those lofty goals.

We have enacted laws that will protect the people. At the same time, we have removed and amended laws that suppress the people. These are but some of the steps taken to change the system.

On the part of the people, they have to judge whether they have changed their mind-set. On the part of the Government, changing “mind-set” means Government that is clean and free from corruption. Some may think that incorruptibility means being free from taking financial bribes. But as I have often cautioned, there is more to that. There are four types of corruptions, namely “ဆွံ့ဝှံ့” (desire or greed), “ဒေါသ” (anger or hostility), “ဘယ” (fear), မေ့လော့ (ignorance). Corruption free Government servants are one who refrains from being self-serving, or those that serve the interest of their inner circle and their kith and kin. Civil servants must be the personnel who have the integrity to stand up for truth and justice. Only then will they be free from “ဆွံ့ဝှံ့” (desire or greed). The act of refraining from bribes by itself is not sufficient to claim one as free of corruption. Looking out for the interest one's close circle, family, or friends and not looking at the interest of the country as a whole is a form of corruption.

“ဒေါသ” (anger or hostility) means going out of the way to do harm to people you don’t like based on maliciousness. I believe my Government is free from those acts. “ဘာသာ” (fear) is being free from fear. It is important that the people must be free from fear. Similarly, the Government must also be free from fear. It must have the courage to do what is right. It has no right to assume the responsibility of the State if it does not have the courage to do what is right for the country.

In the past year, we have had to face many daunting challenges. As you are aware, we have experience economic hardship. Furthermore, we have never had the privilege of enjoying the full essence of peace from the time we became independent to date. For us, national reconciliation is of the essence. This is the second matter that I wish to highlight. However, all three matters are interlinked and interrelated.

We must be free from corruption if we are to achieve national reconciliation and peace. In our relationship with all organizations in the country, whether we like them or not, we must always put at the forefront what is right and just for all.

The people can judge, whether my Government is carrying out its duties in keeping with this practice. We have never targeted or opposed or criticized or made insinuation against any organization or individual during our year in office. If there are things to be said, we would say it in a straight forward fashion. We will never do things based on the narrow interest of an organization, an individual or in our self-interest. If we do not stand on such a principled position, we will never achieve national reconciliation.

Our country is composed of many diverse organizations. We have many ethnic nationalities as well as many different religions. Hence, if we desire to achieve a genuine national reconciliation, our relationship with all the organizations must be based on equal treatment and fairness.

As human beings, we tend to have preferences on whom or what we like or dislike. There are those we may love or hate. However, the Government, under any circumstance, should not entertain those emotions.

We lobbied the people to vote for the NLD during the campaigns. We promised the people that if any of our representatives were found to be corrupt, we would be accountable and take necessary action. We have kept that promise.

In the past year, when we found that appointed individuals members of our party abused rules and regulations or failed to carry out their duties, we took necessary and will continue to do so in the future. At this time when we are putting the interest of the country at the forefront we must refrain from acting in our self-interest. We will not protect those who should not be protected irrespective of whether they have close relation to us or not.

It needs not be stressed that national reconciliation and peace are interlinked. The peace process we are pursuing is not an easy process. Yet, we have high hopes. In the past few days, we have been given greater reason to be more hopeful and optimistic for the success of the second Pang long Conference.

Having said that, hope remains a hope. We have not grasp everything entirely in our hand yet. We will continue to strive to achieve a substantive outcome. Taking the path of peace is like taking a journey. We have to move forward. Sometime we have been standing still. Sometime we have

had to move back a little. But clearly, we have never lost sight of our goal. Therefore, we will continue our march towards that goal.

Our goal is peace. Our goal is national reconciliation. Striving for these goals, we highly appreciate and value the support, assistance and understanding we have received from our friends from around the world. Yet we must be the master of our own destiny. No one understands our country's situation and our needs better than we. I am fully confident that we have the wisdom and capability to choose the right path in fulfilling the needs of our country. This is our spirit. I want the people of Myanmar to have the same spirit and confidence in themselves. You may know this already. I don't actually know how much our Myanmar people are following the news, and making criticism.

The UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on Myanmar citing the situation in the Rakhine State. We dissociated ourselves from it. We responded the way we did not because we do not respect the United Nations. Nor because we do not value friendly relations with member countries of the Human Right Council. We could not accept the resolution because we feel it is not keeping with the realities and it's against the interest of our country. We would be appreciative of and more than happy to welcome any constructive advice. We will do our very best to implement such constructive advice. The initiatives we have taken in the past year were done with the single goal of building a better future for the country. We do not take action for the sake of expediency or appease the majority. We do not choose quick wins just to be applauded or for temporary gain. We took risks to do the right thing. By risk, it meant that whatever we do in life, there are always risks because no one knows or can predict the future. We will do what are needed to be done, relying on conviction and policy priorities. In the past year, we have been doing what was needed to be done. I would welcome any assessment by our people in connection to our Government's performance. It is their right to judge whether we have met their expectations. Because we are a country composed of many ethnic nationalities, we face many complex and sensitive situations in our peace process. Yet, I look at our diversity as a vast resource that can serve our interest. I believe that because of those diversities, we have more opportunities to work together for more progress and development. In working towards national reconciliation and peace, we need to be free from the four types of corruption – “ဆန္ဒ” (desire or greed), “ဒေါသ” (anger or hostility), “ဘယ” (fear), and “မောဟ” (ignorance). Not doing it because one does not like it; doing it because it meets one's interest; doing it because of fear; or doing it because one is oblivious of consequences are all forms of corruptions. The Government has to strive to eliminate all forms of corruption.

Last year, just after the NLD Government took office, I delivered a similar address to the people on the occasion of the Myanmar New Year. I made a promise then that we will always cherish and care for the people and be loyal to the nation. This is the final point that I would like to highlight. Loving and caring for the people means to strive our utmost for continuous progress and development to improve their lives. Just saying that you care is not enough. If one genuinely loves and care for the people, one must strive for their physical and mental wellbeing. Saying you care without taking action would just be empty words. Not a sign of strength for the people. Hence, we have been striving, as promised, for up-lifting the lives of the people. As I've mentioned earlier, you be the best judge how far we have come by analyzing presentations of various ministries.

I would like to bring to your attention a matter that I consider important. Caring for the people means that we need to pay more attention to their health and education. We have accordingly been paying special attention to budget allotment for the health and education sectors. This year we have allotted unprecedented amounts for health and education sectors. This is distinct

departure from past practice. I can guarantee that it will be money worth spending and none will be wasted. We have witness a significant rate of development in the public health care sector. The international community has acknowledged our progress. Significant progress has been noted on the fight against (3) diseases, namely Tuberculosis, Malaria, and HIV/AIDS. The Global Fund established to fight the three diseases has commended Myanmar's remarkable achievement.

Myanmar, which used to be ranked at the bottom of the list in the fight against the three diseases, has now been moved to the top of ranking. The Global Fund not only praised our progress, but has pledged US\$ 500 million for next three years. This success provided me with immense pleasure and satisfaction.

One other success story, I would like to point out that transportation networks have improved considerably. When we issued our economic policy, we stressed that job creation was most important. This year, we managed to establish a good transportation network. We have also scored success in the electricity sector. With electricity comes job creation. People will have opportunity to create their own jobs with their own business opportunities. It will also enable places where transportation and electricity are available to attract investments from businesses.

We must therefore accord priority to electrification in-line with development of transportation and job creation. Utilization of public funds to focus on building a country and to implement plans and projects for the people must be systematically aligned and managed. I am also very proud State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary of the Government (30 March 2017) of our achievement in this regard.

In some of the States and Regions, public funds allotted last year to complete on-going projects have not only been put to good use but large sums have also been saved. The money has not been wasted or lost. Neither has the quality been compromised. These projects and plans have fully met the quality standards as priority was given to ensure quality.

In some States and Regions there are enormous amount of surplus in their balance sheet. Some have millions in surplus - others not millions, but billions in surplus. I am pleased and satisfied with these results. We don't abuse public funds by turning them into our own. Public funds are for the public. It is the resource of the country and we systematically managed and utilized it. This is what we mean by being loyal to the country. Actually, loyalty to the country and caring for the people cannot be separated.

If one is loyal to the country, one should care for its people. One must ensure their development and wellbeing. Vice versa, if one care about the people, one must also be loyal to their country. Only then you are being a dutiful Government. Whenever we are being called the NLD Government, I would also like to remind the people that we are a government of national reconciliation.

When we say we are the NLD Government, we do not mean that the NLD ownership of the Government. When we came to office, we made it clear that we are a government of national reconciliation. Our Government is composed not only of the NLD faithful but includes representatives various parties. This is to avail ourselves to the best talents in the interest of the people.

As to whether Ministers we have appointed have the necessary qualifications or not, only time will tell. I note that some are making progress. Some are faster than others. Some may not be the right person for the right job. If change is needed, we will make the change after careful

consideration. People have the right to know what the Government is doing. What are its priorities. Without transparency people would not be informed. It would mean that we do not trust, respect nor recognize the views of the people.

Doing things in transparent manner would reflect respect for the people. That is why being transparent and accountable are the basic characteristics of a good government. We have been working hard in transparent and accountable manner to serve the interest of the people and the country. I am also aware that we have not achieved the level of development that people have expected.

One year is not a very long period. I have had conversation with people from the countries that had gone through similar experiences like ours. That was two or three months ago. The majority of them acknowledged that our development rate is very fast. In some of their countries, they have had to work 3 or 4 years to achieve the level we have achieved. This is encouraging. It gives us added strength to continue to push forward.

At the time the NLD took over the responsibilities of the State, our slogan was “time for a change”. Now that we are one year old, I feel that we should change our slogan to provide another impetus. I have been thinking what slogan we should adopt. One that is short and precise in meaning. I’ve decided on “Together with the People” to express our desire to continue on this journey together with the people on board with us.

In continuing on this journey together, I would like to introduce a wellknown term “ownership by the country”. Every country must take ownership and be accountable for its own affairs, solving problems and issues, and development, i.e. right to take actions and assume ownership. Ownership, at the same time, demotes being accountable.

We will be accountable for our actions together with the people. We will work together with the people. We will march forward with the spirit that in fulfillment of our duties and responsibilities we will let the people be the source of our strength and likewise, our capabilities and strength will be for the people. I hope the people of the Union will join hand with the Government and assist it in our march towards our future together.

Respect and trust of the people is not something easily obtained. It cannot be robbed. It is not an inherent right. However, in order to continue to enjoy the respect, support, and confidence from the people, I can boldly promise that we will redouble our efforts. When I entered the politics, I made a promise that I will do and give my very best. I will not be able to give more than my very best. And if my very best is not enough for the country and if some other individuals or organizations are more qualified than us to achieve better results, we would be more than happy and ready to step aside. That is one thing every democratic government must understand clearly. Democracy does not mean one can remain in power permanently. It is not a matter of thinking that we are the smartest or the best to do the job. Democracy means “အနိစ္စတရား” (impermanency of all things). We must also understand the concept of impermanency in politics and that the situation and position of the government is only as durable and strong as people’s acceptance. We welcome people to look at our Government. Give critical remarks where necessary. Assist us and work with us in matters that could make a difference for the interest of the people and the country.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation to the people. I have noted that however hard some organizations and individuals have been criticizing our Government, the people have steadfastly rendered their support and stood by us and have shown understanding. I can boldly say that they are supporting us, in every way possible, to give us an opportunity to do what needs to

be done. as you are all aware, we requested public donation for our National Reconciliation and Peace Center. within a short time we received over (14) billion kyats. the donors are not just big businesses. many ordinary people have responded. what is so endearing to me is that everybody chipped in to contribute - one thousand here, five thousand there. this is a reflection that everybody is trying to support us in whatever way possible. their gesture of support have not only contributed significantly to the peace funds but have also provided encouragement and strength for our endeavor. by the same reckoning, if each and every citizen would render their support to the ongoing work of the Government, i can say with confidence that we will achieve progress and development. When succeeding generations look back to these times, they will be saying that this was the dawn of the new era in the history of our country.

Thank you.