

**Full Text of the Nation-wide Radio Address Delivered
by President U Thein Sein on 1 January 2014**

My fellow citizens,

In this month's radio speech, I will be discussing the current political developments, and my position on these developments.

An important achievement in 2013 was the emergence within our society of a new political culture where different political groups avoided direct confrontation and instead overcame challenges through negotiation and dialogue. The reform process is stronger because we have been able to work collaboratively on various issues.

Over the past 30 months since we embarked on the new political system, the lowering of suspicion and mistrust that was previously present is a clear indication of the new political culture we have worked so hard to create.

An achievement of the reforms was the much-anticipated and grand hosting of the 27th South-East Asian Games in December. The success of the first SEA Games to be hosted on Myanmar soil in 44 years, was due to the support of the public, and heralded the entry of our country as a respected member of the global community. Regarding these Games, I would like to make two points.

First, I would like to honor all the athletes of all ethnic groups, and from all corners of the country contesting for medals for fulfilling their national duty. I strongly believe that the support from citizens living both inside and outside the country provided a driving force for medals. Additionally, the Games were more than about winning medals but a valuable display of national unity.

Second, I would like to talk about the contribution of young people in making these Games a success. Of great benefit for our country are the experiences these Games provided these youths in self-sacrifice, duty, hard work, organizational skills, and interactions with different countries. We should all be proud of the success of the Games. At the same time, we will have to try to improve ourselves by drawing on the experiences acquired in organizing these Games.

If we look back at the political changes in the country, we see that political groups within a short time have been able to participate in a meaningful manner in a political system created by the 2008 Constitution. With these conditions as the basis, we must work towards increasing political vibrancy by improving participation and citizens' political rights.

Related to these efforts, a culture of debate and negotiation is now present in our society. As an example, because we overcame past political issues and challenges with understanding and good intentions, a discussion about constitutional amendment issues and other related issues that would have been impossible before is now openly discussed and debated among the public. We are also seeing political groups organize their constitutional amendment

activities. A parliamentary Committee to Study and Amend the Constitution formed with members of parliament representing political parties and Tatmadaw is already canvassing for comments from the public and various organizations. The Tatmadaw has also submitted its proposals and comments to the Committee.

At the same time, the country's main political group, the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and other political parties have also actively organized forums and meetings to discuss constitutional amendments. Just the fact that these activities have been held in a free and open manner shows that the level of political maturity in our country has risen.

Another positive development is the manner in which individuals and leaders from all regions are able to express their opinions freely through news media and social networks. We are now witnessing the emergence of the most important indicator of a modern democratic society—the freedom to openly discuss and debate politics.

I would now like to express my views on the constitutional amendment issue. I believe that a healthy Constitution must be amended from time to time to address the national, economic, and social needs of our society. There are three things to consider concerning the amending of the current Constitution.

First, political dialogue, essential for national reconciliation, and the foundation of the national peace process, may require the amending, or revision of the Constitution.

Second, there are some views that for an open and free society to emerge, the Constitution must be amended to strengthen democratic attitudes and values. These areas must be decided with the perspectives, wisdom, and benevolence of all involved in the political system.

The third concerns amending the provision on the qualification of the political leadership of the country. I would not want restrictions being imposed on the right of any citizen to become the leader of the country. At the same time, we will need to have all necessary measures in place in order to defend our national interests and sovereignty. In trying to solve the ongoing political differences, we must all choose to do the right things in order not to fall into political impasse.

We will undertake the amending of the Constitution to facilitate national reconciliation, the foundation of the national peace process, through consensus based on mutual understanding, and listening to each other's demands. At the same time, I am honored and delighted that the government, Parliament, political parties, other political forces, ethnic groups, civil society groups, the Tatmadaw, and armed ethnic groups are all acting in a benevolent manner in striving to reach a nationwide ceasefire agreement. Therefore, I expect political dialogue to begin soon once final negotiations are over.

In 2014, our country will take over the important responsibility of chairing the regional grouping ASEAN. Our chairmanship of ASEAN comes at an important time since regional issues are becoming more interrelated, and South East Asian countries are playing an increasingly important role on the global scene. Just as the hosting of the 27th SEA Games succeeded because of the contributions of our citizens, we will ensure success of our chairmanship of ASEAN through the joint efforts of our people. As chair, we will represent the entire region, and also elevate the image of our country on the global stage.

I have also tried to achieve national harmony by consolidating current political reforms and by ensuring political stability and smooth transition for the younger generation. I have met

with the representatives of all organizations that have requested to see me. I have tried to accommodate different demands and political positions of diverse political groups as much as I could. I also understand that not everybody will be happy with what we have tried to do. Some political groups might think that we have not acted sufficiently in response to their demands or requests. I would like to urge all of you to understand the political reality of the country in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding among us.

Since the beginning of my administration, I have not done anything in an unaccountable manner. I have tried to promote harmony. I have tried to do everything I can to meet the needs and wishes of the people. However, I would like to emphasize that if the political demands made by the public are larger than what the current political system can accommodate, we can all end up in a political deadlock. If this happens, we could lose all the political freedom we have achieved so far. I would therefore like to urge all of you to handle such situation with care and wisdom.

I would also like to inform all of you that with the aim of national reconciliation together with the hard work of the Prisoner Review Committee, and in keeping with my promise, all political prisoners have been freed by the end of last year.

In conclusion, I urge all citizens to work together constructively, even more so than the previous year, in 2014.

May all the people be spiritual and mental well-beings.

MNA
