



MYANMAR

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Statement by

His Excellency U Wunna Maung Lwin,

Union Minister for Foreign Affairs and

Head of the Delegation of

the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

in the General Debate

at the 69th United Nations General Assembly

New York, 29 September 2014

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Mr. President,

1. At the outset, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to Your Excellency for your well-deserved election as the President of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that, with your vast wisdom and rich diplomatic skills, our deliberations will bring about fruitful outcomes.

2. In the same vein, I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. John W. Ashe, for his outstanding leadership at the 68th Session of the General Assembly.

3. We are gathered here at a time when the world is facing pressing global challenges and security threats that must be addressed collectively with urgency. Our planet is heating up by a clear and imminent danger of climate change. The ugly head of terrorism is resurfacing. The global village is gripped with the fear of spreading Ebola epidemic. Tension and mistrust are building up among the big powers, reminiscent of the cold war rivalry. The number and scale of regional or local conflicts is growing in some parts of the world. A billion people are still trapped in poverty. The world we want is still a far-away dream.

4. Climate Change is no longer an issue for scientific argument. It is an issue of survival that requires our urgent action. Many developing countries economically dependent on agriculture as well as small island states will bear the brunt of its impact. It is of utmost importance to reach a new global commitment on climate protection and emission reduction objectives. My delegation is therefore thankful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for organizing the Climate Summit 2014 with a loud and clear message for an urgent and united action. Myanmar will continue to work together with the international community for a meaningful, implementable and universal climate agreement in Paris in 2015.

Mr. President,

5. In support of your vision for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda, we must intensify our efforts at this session to set the world on a path to sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions. Eradication of extreme poverty and delivering sustainable and inclusive development must remain as the central and overarching objective of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. In this process, we must also work together to find effective means of implementation, including mobilization of financial and technology support to ensure the success of the agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. Ebola outbreak in West Africa, with its unprecedented nature and scope, is alarming. We must not see the outbreak unique to one particular people or a place. It is the challenge common to mankind. All available resources and expertise should be mobilized and deployed before it becomes an economic, social, humanitarian, political and security nightmare. Myanmar welcomes the swift and timely response by the UN Secretary-General in proactively establishing the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response- UNMEER.

7. Terrorism cannot be condoned for any reason or under any circumstances. Ruthless killings and atrocities in the name of religion must not be tolerated. Myanmar always opposes terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We are not oblivious to the fate of those who fall victims to terrorism. The international community must be united to eliminate these horrible crimes. In this regard, my delegation fully supports the statement issued by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers a few days ago here in New York.

8. It was the dream of its founding members that the United Nations would stand for a world in which people of different nations and cultures look on each other not as object of fear and suspicion but as potential partner, able to exchange goods and ideas to their mutual benefits. In facing a broad range of fundamental peace and development challenges, this vision is crucial to follow these days. Myanmar firmly believes in the continued relevancy and legitimacy of the United Nations in world affairs. We will continue to actively cooperate with it in line with the principles of our Foreign Policy.

9. Thanks to the positive changes in Myanmar, the cooperation between Myanmar and the United Nations is now better than ever. The United Nations and its agencies are showing greater interest in Myanmar. And, they are coming back with a helping hand to

the people of Myanmar in all aspects of their life. The Government, on its part, is facilitating them for the effective implementation of their missions.

10. Maintenance of international peace and security is one of the main purposes of the United Nations. Myanmar, as a peace-loving nation, abhors weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and is fully cognizant of the danger of nuclear weapons. Towards this end, Myanmar, since 1995, has annually tabled a draft resolution on Nuclear Disarmament. We will be repeating this exercise at the current session of the General Assembly. We encourage all Member States to positively support our draft resolution. If we follow the roadmap in the resolution with a strong political will, a world free of nuclear weapons will be within our grasp sooner.

11. I would like to apprise this Assembly that Myanmar is making domestic preparations with a view to ratifying major international disarmament instruments. Considerable achievement have been made in this process. I am pleased to announce that the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) has just approved the Myanmar's accession to the Biological Weapons Convention-BWC today.

12. Winds of change have spread across Myanmar since the past three years. The scope and pace of positive changes in Myanmar have earned a remarkable recognition and encouragement by the international community. These changes have contributed to raising Myanmar's profile in the regional and international arena. On the regional stage, Myanmar held the mantle of the Chair of the Bay of Bengal Initiatives for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation-BIMSTEC till March this year. After successfully performing this responsibility, we are now shouldering the prestigious duty of the Chair of the ASEAN. Under our chairmanship, ASEAN is exerting its efforts to speed up the ASEAN Community building process with the theme of "Moving Forward in Unity to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community".

Mr. President,

13. Myanmar is advancing well on the path of peaceful democratic transition that began over 3 years ago by setting in motion the waves of political and economic reforms.

14. The First Wave was the peaceful transformation from the military government to a multi-party democratic system where all political forces are working together to overcome differences through dialogue at the *Hluttaws* (Parliaments). An all-inclusive political system has been established, bringing in all stakeholders in the process through national

reconciliation. The First Wave of reform has brought about the national reconciliation, granting of a series of amnesties, creation of greater political space, freedom of media, and freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly .

15. It was followed by the Second Wave of reform, unleashing an array of political, economic, administrative and private sector development reforms.

16. Now, the Third Wave of reform has been launched, aimed at laying down a firm foundation for a new democratic state, and delivering benefit to the people by fulfilling their socio-economic needs.

17. We are determined to keep the reforms on track through ensuring peace, stability and national reconciliation. Since our democracy is still in its infancy, we are facing a multitude of daunting challenges like other countries in transition. The government has a long to-do list with limited capacity. We are determined to overcome these challenges. And we are convinced that we will achieve our objectives. We need understanding and continued support of the international community in our efforts for economic development and capacity building to lay a solid foundation for a democratic society.

18. One of the issues that attract domestic and international attention is the process of amending the present Constitution of Myanmar. In this connection, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) set up the Constitutional Amendment Review Joint Committee in July last year. After soliciting suggestions and recommendations from the general public and from political parties, the Constitutional Amendment Implementation Committee has been formed to address the issue of Constitution amendment based on the suggestions received.

19. Putting democratic values into practice, the government places much more emphasis and consideration on the aspiration of our entire people. Accordingly, we are laying foundations to successfully conduct an independent, free and fair election within a legal framework without compromising national sovereignty. In this context, Myanmar has recently received the visit of Need Assessment Mission from the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations.

20. All existing political parties are expected to take part in the elections. The final decision will be made by the people on the Election Day.

21. Peace and stability is a prerequisite for political stability and socio-economic development of the country. Strengthening the national reconciliation is an integral part of our reform process. We are working together with all ethnic armed groups in good faith to reach a nationwide ceasefire agreement. So far we have already reached such an agreement with 14 out of 16 groups. We are now working on a draft framework for political dialogue which will pave the way for bringing an end to the six-decade long conflict. The government is serious in its commitment for the success of the peace process. It is open-minded to discuss all issues except those that could undermine the unity and sovereignty of the State. This political dialogue will also become a historic forum for discussion of all issues of national concern. We are confident that we are now getting closer to achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace.

22. There has been steady progress in the promotion and protection of human rights in my country. A series of Presidential amnesties have been granted. This creates an enabling environment for everyone to participate in the parliament, political parties, civil society organizations and labour organizations. The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC), which was first established in 2011, has been reconstituted very recently with a view to functioning as an independent entity. Many complaint mechanisms, including the MNHRC, have been made available to citizen to file complaints in case of violation of their rights.

23. In this new era, press and media freedom is one of the most visible outcomes of the reforms. In contributing to the all-inclusive reform process, the media is getting more space now. The abolishment of the decades-old press censorship, the publishing of a multitude of private newspapers and journals and the enactment of the new Media Law are among the significant achievements in our media landscape.

24. Myanmar is now combating human trafficking, preventing gender violence and protecting of children with a firm resolve.

25. The Central Body headed by the Union Minister for Home Affairs is now implementing the second five-year plan from 2012 to 2016 in combating human trafficking in Myanmar. This noble endeavour was conducted in close cooperation with government entities, UN agencies and NGOs and INGOs.

26. Sexual violence is a crime strongly abhorred in our traditional values and national culture. It is strictly forbidden by law. Myanmar joined the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict at Global Summit in London in June this year.

This signing up reflects the state policy of zero tolerance on the use of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war.

27. The Armed Forces of Myanmar is making important progress in its implementation of the Action Plan for the prevention of recruitment of underage children. Due to our strong commitment, there is no new underage recruitment, unwittingly or otherwise.

28. All major concerns related to human rights have been addressed to a larger extent in the new Myanmar. We have now reached the middle tier of the human rights ladder. This progress is contributing to the better enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the people of Myanmar. Therefore, we are now fully convinced that Myanmar should no longer remain on the agendas of the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly.

29. We are also paying great attention and making efforts to address the issue of the communal violence that had occurred between the two communities in Rakhine State. The history, the diversity and the complexity of the issue must be fully understood before jumping to conclusion. The situation should not be looked at in a superficial manner. The international community should contribute pragmatically and objectively to find a durable solution. In addressing the root cause, we are working for peace, stability, harmony and development of all people in Rakhine State. An Action Plan is being finalized and will soon be launched. Once in place, it will be implemented in a systematic and timely manner.

30. Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank all international partners in contributing to our efforts in addressing the current needs of the affected people. As development is one of the main challenges in Rakhine State, I would also like to invite the international community particularly the United Nations to provide much-needed development assistance there.

31. The government of Myanmar has been focusing on poverty reduction and rural development with a view to uplifting the living standard of rural and urban people. We are striving to realize the structural changes from agricultural based economy to industrial one. As these efforts are more and more crystallized, we have been enjoying a steady economic growth. We have achieved GDP growth rate of 5.6%, 7.3% and 8.7% in the past three years.

32. This encouraging trend on economic growth and overall progress in our reform process has made us to take an important decision. Taking this opportunity, I would like to announce that Myanmar is fully determined and has initiated internal process to graduate from the Least Developed Countries status.

33. In this regard, President U Thein Sein has communicated to the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressing our intention and determination for graduating from the LDC status. A high-level national committee and subcommittees are actively coordinating domestic measures including a transition strategy for our graduation. We are now working closely with the relevant UN agencies for technical and necessary assistance.

Mr. President,

34. Myanmar has made tremendous progress over the past three and a half years since it has begun wide-ranging reforms in transition to democracy. Myanmar's success in peaceful transformation was even lauded as a model in the world today. Despite all these achievements, there remains many challenges and hurdles on our path to democracy and development. We are fully aware of these daunting challenges. We will not be complacent. We are resolute and determined to continue our relentless efforts for reforms and for building a democratic state.

35. Myanmar is changing and changing in the right direction. We are laying a solid foundation for a democratic state where we can live in harmony, peace and prosperity. The development in Myanmar should also be viewed in a more balanced and objective manner. It is the primary responsibility of the people of Myanmar to realization of their long-held aspiration for democracy, peace and prosperity. The continued support and understanding of the international community would contribute positively to Myanmar's reform process. "Rome was not built in a day."

36. I thank you.
