

## **Press Release**

It is regrettable that the 2016 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report of the US Department of State drops Myanmar from Tier 2 Watch List status to Tier 3 at a time when the new democratic government is stepping up its efforts to protect its migrant workers and victims of human trafficking and forced labour.

We understand that while Myanmar meets the criteria for the Tier 2 Watch List, having remained at that ranking for the last four years, a further extension is no longer possible. Therefore, Myanmar has been moved to Tier 3. It is hoped that steps can be taken to ensure that restrictions associated with Tier 3 countries will not be allowed to hamper cooperation between Myanmar and the United States, particularly as Myanmar is working assiduously to alleviate poverty, a primary breeder of conditions that lead to human trafficking.

Myanmar has been addressing the TIP issue as a national priority and making tangible progress in various aspects. Elimination of forced labour through an ILO complaints mechanism is in progress. Extraction of forced labour by anyone is a criminal offence subject to stringent penalties both in law and in practice. Implementation work on the goal of prevention of underage recruitment and use of children in military with the United Nations Country Task Force is in its final phase. Myanmar saved, sheltered and repatriated voluntarily in close cooperation with the country of origin, irregular migrants cast adrift in the Indian Ocean. Most of the irregular migrants who tried to sail across the Indian Ocean were proven not to have originated from Myanmar. Bilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries, particularly on the protection of trafficked victims, is progressing well. A sound legal framework in line with international standards is in place and enforcement capabilities have been reinforced.

Myanmar will continue to step up its efforts with regard to anti-trafficking measures, seriously taking into account recommendations made in the 2016 TIP Report. The issue of human smuggling and trafficking will be addressed vigorously in close cooperation with international partners.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Nay Pyi Taw

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