

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

My fellow citizens,

In this month's radio address, I would like to update you on the work of my government in January.

The difficulties, challenges and constraints we have encountered during this process of political and economic reforms, and peace building are not uncommon for a country that has recently embarked on this process. We have yet to achieve tangible results in some areas because of these difficulties. To address issues in these areas, we have set clear goals, and will proceed with determination to achieve tangible results.

Fulfilling the longstanding needs of our society is easy to talk about but much more difficult to achieve in practice. The difficulty of the work we must undertake on political reforms can be likened to swimming upstream. Despite the challenges, my administration will try its utmost to achieve our goals.

We are determined to achieve peace and national unity. Because of the cooperation of the government, parliament, political parties, political groups, civil society, business groups, Tatmadaw, ethnic armed groups, other ethnic groups, and the public, we were able to address many difficulties and challenges during the past two years of peace building and national unity. It is due to this collective action that we are step by step closer to a nationwide ceasefire agreement, followed by political dialogue that will lead to peace.

A recent accomplishment was the successful holding of the ethnic armed groups meeting organized by the KNU in Law Khee Lar, Kayin State. Building on the positive results achieved at the meeting, the necessary negotiations will take place to hold a peace conference in Hpaan, Kayin State to discuss the signing date and other details of the nationwide ceasefire agreement. Next, political dialogue, necessary for national reconciliation, will begin with the establishment of a framework followed by the commencement of meetings. These achievements are the result of our collective determination and perseverance.

Alongside the establishment of peace-based national unity, we are initiating fundamental reforms in the essential social development areas of national healthcare and education. These reforms would not be possible without the freedoms, openness, and assistance from the international community that all result from our political reforms.

A major development this month was the resumption of World Bank assistance to Myanmar after a break of several years. Related to this, the Second Myanmar Development and Cooperation Forum was held this month to energize efforts to ensure effective coordination with our international partners.

In consultation with experts, we are undertaking fundamental reforms to establish a national healthcare system to ensure healthcare access for all, rich or poor. The Ministry of Health and

the International Development Association, which is part of the World Bank Group, will jointly adopt short- and long-term plans. To successfully establish universal health coverage accessible by all, it will be important for all of us to take personal ownership and make the correct choices to come up with home-grown process, just as we did with our political reforms.

We will need to learn from the lessons of how other countries overcame the difficulties and challenges of establishing a national healthcare system. Reflecting on these lessons and our own political, economic, and social conditions, I urge all of you to come together and act with a sense of national duty to ensure the emergence of a system agreeable to you all.

The national education reforms are of utmost importance for our future generations. We are already seeing wide-ranging discussions on this topic by civil society, education policy groups, and experts. I expect positive results to emerge from these discussions and debates. We are also establishing a President's Scholarship Award for outstanding Myanmar students to study at international universities so that future generations can have long-lasting educational opportunities, and also study subjects that will benefit the development of the country.

Another development is the emergence of civil society voicing their opinions and demands about the standards and norms of our open and free society. The demands for laws that are in line with the new political system should reflect the needs of our society. We should view these positive demands as energizing the new political culture.

I have also noticed disputes and voicing of opinions concerning land ownership and illegal entry and occupation of land. Land issues have challenged every country that has undertaken reforms. Land issues are difficult to solve since they are related to political, economic, and social issues. We are addressing land issues systematically with emphasis on taking correct, and practical action. The government is also working with state governments to ensure data concerning landless families is collected and the families resettled according to township development plans. However, I would like to add that we will take appropriate action against those that illegally enter and occupy land.

The ASEAN Para Games were also held last month. I am proud of those Myanmar athletes that won medals at the event. Despite their disabilities, the athletes showed that they are still productive members of society, and given suitable roles, are valuable contributors to national development. These games remind our society that we all have the responsibility to help people with disabilities.

Last month, the ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting was held in our cultural capital Bagan. Myanmar is the ASEAN chair this year, and we were able to discuss regional cooperation in the areas of investment, trade, employment opportunities, security, and skills development.

We will soon begin political dialogue with ethnic groups as part of the peace based national unity process. Therefore, when considering changes to the 2008 Constitution, I urge you not to overlook the outcome of this dialogue.

Since the main demand of the ethnic groups is a union based on federalist principles including equality, self-determination, ethnic rights, and preservation of their cultures and languages, political dialogue of these and other wideranging issues will necessarily result in some amendments to the Constitution. Moreover, these amendments must be made in conjunction with those that strengthen democratic values and norms to ensure a healthy constitution.

Therefore, I urge those primarily responsible for constitutional amendments, namely, parliament, political parties, and political groups to take the above factors into consideration when making the amendments.

On the whole, I would like to encourage you all to try to overcome the difficulties, constraints and challenges that we encounter in creating a new political setting that the entire society has longed for with an open mind, tolerance and through your preferred approach. I would also like to shed light on the fact that although ethnic leaders initially attended the recent conference of ethnic armed groups in Law Khee Lar with diverse views, they reached a common position at the closing of the conference to sign the nationwide ceasefire agreement. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all ethnic leaders who contributed to such an outcome.

I particularly like to acknowledge the remark made by the Chairman of the Karen National Union, Saw Mutu Sae Poe that in order to make sure that the peace process moves forward step by step, all parties “must make history by courageously signing the (nationwide ceasefire) agreement”. He has urged all of us to work together to address a very difficult task in our history. Making such difficult political choices is an integral part of the new political culture and political setting I have repeatedly noted. I would like to conclude by saying that I am fully convinced that our efforts will yield good results.

I wish you all good health.
