



MYANMAR

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STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY U WUNNA MAUNG LWIN,

UNION MINISTER

FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR

AND LEADER OF THE MYANMAR DELEGATION

AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE

SIXTY-EIGHTH SESSION

OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(New York, 30 September 2013)

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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 68th United Nations General Assembly
New York, 30 September, 2013**

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to Your Excellency for your election as President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Myanmar delegation. I am confident that your diplomatic skills and vast knowledge will guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion. I would also like to pay special tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for his job well done in guiding the 67th Session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

We are fast approaching the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals. With less than 850 days to go, we are now in a sense of urgency to look back our past journey and chart the way forward. Despite laudable advances made in meeting several of the global MDG targets in the past thirteen years, there remains inequality and variations in achievement across regions and within countries.

Therefore, we need to intensify our efforts and accelerate actions to the full realization of the MDGs in the remaining short span of time.

In many developing countries, especially least developed ones, a large proportion of populations are still grappling with poverty, hunger, economic and social disparity and environmental degradation. It is therefore most pertinent and timely for the United Nations to set the Post-2015 Development Agenda, emphasizing on enhancing our efforts to eradicate extreme poverty, protect the environment and to bring about inclusive and sustainable economic development. On our part, we have been exerting relentless efforts to raising socio-economic conditions of the people with poverty alleviation as the core priority of the national economic strategy in commensurate with the MDGs. My delegation adds to the voice of the Group of 77 in calling to address the key implementation gaps of the MDGs and the poverty agenda over the next two years, as we craft a sound roadmap towards a post-2015 development agenda. In this regard, national efforts be assisted by international support and enabling environment. The role of the global partnership for development must also be strengthened.

Achieving inclusive and sustainable development will be the one of most paramount challenge of this century for the United Nations. Therefore my delegation welcomes the establishment of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development by the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

This year, Myanmar celebrates 64th anniversary of its membership in the family of the United Nations. We believe that the United Nations system remains relevant and important to the current international situation. In this age replete with global challenges, the United Nations is more essential than ever. We have trust in the world body's capacity and capability of maintaining international peace and security, safeguarding fundamental human rights and promotion of economic and social development. Therefore, we have always been cooperating with the United Nations in good faith. As cooperation with the United Nations is the cornerstone of our Foreign Policy, we have all along strictly abided by the decisions and resolutions of the United Nations. We believe that the UN should be more democratic, representative and effective in order to face security and economic challenges in many parts of the world.

Mr. President,

The continued existence of weapons of mass destruction particularly nuclear weapons poses the greatest threat to mankind. Myanmar is therefore actively pursuing the cause of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation at the international forums. One of the testimonies of her aspiration was demonstrated in the annual resolution on "Nuclear disarmament" submitted by our delegation since 1995.

Through this resolution, we have been calling upon Nuclear-Weapon States to cease immediately the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons with a view to taking measures leading to their total elimination within a specified framework of time.

With this firm belief, the Government of Myanmar has signed the Additional Protocol for the IAEA Safeguard Agreement on Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty on 17 September 2013. This is yet another significant developments which testifying our commitment towards the goals of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Myanmar will continue to cooperate with IAEA and the international community for its implementation. Myanmar fully subscribes to the fundamental principle of peaceful settlement of disputes as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Accordingly, Myanmar has been contributing its fair share to the regional and international peace and security.

Mr. President,

In the domestic front, the Government of President U Thein Sein has been undertaking unprecedented, wide ranging political and economic reforms over the past two and a half years. The Government has dedicated its efforts to fulfill the twin objectives inspired by the people: to establish peace, stability and rule of law; and to advance socio-economic development of the lives of the people.

The first component of the reform was on political transformation. The objective was to bring about peace and stability, national unity and reconciliation. Now, we have been able to establish a firm foundation for building democratic society. Political space has been created for every stakeholders and the all-inclusive political system is in place. A number of new political parties are also mushrooming in anticipation of the next general elections. In a short time, the legislative bodies are also functioning well in an active and vibrant manner. Numerous legislations have been enacted to the benefits of the people, including new laws permitting greater freedom of press, freedom of speech and association. A Committee to review the Constitution has also been put in place by the Parliament. A series of amnesties has been granted and set free thousands of prisoners. We are speedily working through a screening mechanism to ensure that no prisoner of conscience remain behind bars by the end of the year.

Emergence of civil societies has also contributed to strengthening democratic values and practices. We have now been able to nurture a new culture of dialogue and accommodation among people of differing views and belief. Political actors in Myanmar, together with the people, are taking forward-looking approach to keep the reform process running, putting at the fore the interest of the country and the people. We are also taking steps for establishing rule of law, good governance and clean government.

We have also made tangible progress in our efforts towards national reconciliation. The Government's peace overtures have led to reaching ceasefire agreements with all armed groups for the first time in over 60 years. We are hopeful that we will be able to celebrate the signing of a nation-wide ceasefire agreement in Nay Pyi Taw very soon. We are optimistic to be able to start a new round of political dialogue at the Union (Central) level in the near future to strike comprehensive and lasting peace agreement. We have no illusion that the next step will be an easy one. But we are determined to pursue this path for the sake of our people as they deserve it for so long.

Mr. President,

The hard-won peace and success in democratic transformation will not be realistic or sustainable until and unless we deliver economic and social needs of the people. Therefore, as the second component of reforms, we have opened up the economy through economic liberalization, financial reforms, inviting foreign investments, people-centered development approach, rural development, poverty alleviation and equitable development. We have also created investor-friendly environment. The Government is focusing on poverty alleviation and rural development. We have targeted to reduce the current poverty rate from 26 percent to 16 percent by 2015 as prescribed in the MDGs.

We are also implementing the Framework on Economic and Social Reform (FESR) with a people-centered approach with a view to bringing about inclusive growth for the country and its people.

Narrowing development gap and enhancing equitable development among States and Regions is essential for fostering national unity for a multi-ethnic nation like Myanmar. We shall enhance our efforts to fight corruption and protect the environment to achieve sustainable development. Our commitment was demonstrated by our accession to the UN Convention on Anti-Corruption and establishment of a national anti-corruption body. We are now taking necessary steps to become a signatory to the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI).

Recently, the Government is turning its focus to “private sector development” as a fourth wave of reform. At this stage, the Government is placing a great emphasis on improving institutional infrastructure and regulatory framework to facilitate business, trade and investment.

We are truly grateful to the international community for their invaluable support and encouragement in our democratic transition as well as in our efforts for the socio-economic development of the people of Myanmar. At the same time we also need assistance for human resource development so that we will be able to stand on our own in the future. We welcome responsible trade and investment that will transfer technology to develop our economy, to create jobs and to lift our people from poverty.

We would try our best to ensure that no one from the communities or our national ethnic groups be left behind and excluded from enjoying the fruits of our reforms and the exciting life of the nation.

Mr. President,

Myanmar is a multi-racial and multi-faith nation. Various ethnic populations with the world's four great religions- Buddhists, Christians, Muslims and Hindus have been living side by side in peace and harmony as fellow citizens of Myanmar. The Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar also designated the four religions as officially recognized faiths of the country. There are always people who wish to rock the boat. We will not let anyone to take advantage of political openness to instigate violence among different ethnic or religious communities. President U Thein Sein has clearly stated that the government will take a zero-tolerance approach to anyone fueling ethnic hatred. The Government has been making serious efforts to resolve the problem through short-term and long-term plans. It includes our extensive efforts, in cooperation with UN and NGO humanitarian organizations, to improve the living conditions and livelihoods of all affected peoples without discrimination. In parallel to these efforts, the Government is also encouraging inter-faith dialogues across the country with a view to promoting understanding and trust among different communities.

On the other hand, the National Human Rights Commission, an independent human rights body of Myanmar, has also been working closely and intensively with domestic civil society organizations, inter-faith groups and regional and international human rights bodies for the promotion and protection of human rights in the country.

Our reform process is still at a nascent and sensitive stage where there is little room for error. With this in mind, the President has publicly emphasized the need for everyone to refrain from doing anything that could jeopardize Myanmar's peaceful transition.

Mr. President,

While undertaking political and reforms process domestically, we have also been able to reach out to the international community. The overwhelming support that we have received from the international community and the United Nations has contributed significantly towards the transition efforts in the country.

Myanmar is ready to take over the Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014 for the very first time since the country joined the Organization in 1997. We take this opportunity with great honour. We shall be working closely with our fellow ASEAN members as well as with its Dialogue Partners in discharge of this important responsibility to move forward in unity to a peaceful and prosperous community.

Mr. President,

In the process of Myanmar's transition to democracy, expectations are high within the country as well as from the international community. For the government and people of Myanmar, the task is daunting. There are many challenges ahead. We are still in the critical transition period. However, we are resolute to march forward along our chosen path. There will be no turning back. But we will not take anything for granted. It is incumbent upon the government and people of Myanmar to be vigilant all times so that we will not fall into the trap of the detractors of the reform process.

We need continued support and encouragement of the international community. We always welcome the friendly and constructive advice and helping hands of friends far and near in our nation building process. However, we are fully cognizant of the fact that ultimately the people of Myanmar themselves are responsible to decide their own destiny and shape their own future.

Mr. President,

The government of President U Thein Sein is laying a solid foundation for democracy, peace and development for the people of Myanmar. Myanmar's transition to democracy has been applauded by observers as one of the most promising efforts of democratization in the world today. The success we have achieved so far on the road to democracy has been made possible through the joint efforts of the leadership and the people of Myanmar driven by the strong and genuine desire to change. The road ahead is long and full of challenges.

We would spare no efforts to overcome any challenges and go ahead on the journey that we have set out to build a nation of peace, democracy and prosperity. As we continue our journey, we need the understanding, continued encouragement and support of the United Nations and the international community. We will never lose sight of our goals and we are determined to fulfill the aspiration of the people of Myanmar.

I thank you.