



MYANMAR

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Statement

by

His Excellency Mr. Thant Kyaw

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

at the High-Level Segment of the

Twenty-Eighth Session of the Human Rights Council

(Geneva, 4 March 2015)

Mr. President,
High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your outstanding leadership as the President of the Human Rights Council. I also wish to express our continued support for the work of the High Commissioner as mandated by the United Nations General Assembly.

It is my great honour to address this august body at a time when member states around the globe, countries in every corner of the world are facing human rights challenges. It is of paramount importance to see these situations through the lens of impartiality, universality and non-selectivity. Otherwise, we in this room can in anyway bring about a climate where genuine dialogue and constructive cooperation take place. Only through working together, can we aim to reach our common goal of promoting and protecting human rights for all.

Mr. President,

As a country committed to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of its citizens, Myanmar has made tangible progress since a new era commenced in 2011. Now the people of Myanmar have begun to enjoy the fruits of democratization and the multifaceted reforms.

In this new era of the country, a total of 119 laws have been newly enacted or amended while several other outdated laws have been repealed. Since 2011, the government has carried out a wide range of policy reforms and institutional adjustments to ensure that the transformation proceeds smoothly and sustainably. These unswerving efforts contribute greatly to the promotion and protection of human rights.

The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission was established by the Presidential Ordinance in 2011. In order to be more compliant with the Paris Principles, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Law was enacted by the Parliament on 28 March 2014. One of the objectives of the law is to create a society where human rights are respected and protected in recognition of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In accordance with the enabling law, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission was reconstituted with eleven members in September 2014, and it is now carrying out its mandates effectively.

Mr. President,

The termination of censorship on press and media publications right from the start of the new administration has enabled Myanmar to open the doors wider to freedom of opinion and expression. The emergence of private dailies has given the people of Myanmar a better access to diversified sources of information including internet and social media.

Myanmar is a society with traditionally robust civil society organizations. They have been significantly playing a sharing and caring role for the needy ones in the community. At present, over 600 local NGOs and over 100 INGOs have been registered, and they are functioning well throughout the country. Currently, there are over 1400 basic labour

organizations and four labour federations, together with 28 basic employers' organizations and one employers' federation.

Since the enactment of the Peaceful Gathering and Procession Law in 2012, the people of Myanmar have been exercising the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. In 2014, over 400 peaceful protests were facilitated by the authorities concerned.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to update the Council on the developments in Rakhine State. Since the inter-communal violence broke out in 2012, we have been able to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents. The Rakhine Plan of Action is being finalized. It embodies measures including the maintenance and enhancement of harmony among the communities and the provision of sustainable livelihoods for all.

Mr. President,

Myanmar takes pride in preserving the time-honoured tradition of respecting women's rights. Discriminatory traditions and practices against women have never existed in our land. The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013-2022 was adopted in 2013. As a State party to the CEDAW, Myanmar has recently submitted its fourth and fifth combined national report to the CEDAW Committee.

In December 2014, Myanmar adopted the National Social Protection Strategy, with the technical support of the UNICEF. The strategy embodies a strong focus on the first and very critical 1,000 days of life, complemented by the provisions of financial assistance to pregnant women and children up to 2 years of age, long-term support for children up to 15 years, a school feeding programme and other programmes for children with disabilities. Compared to 2011, the government has increased the national education expenditure 3.7 times and the health expenditure 8.1 times in 2014.

Mr. President,

Myanmar has further enhanced its standing in connection with international treaties in different areas. In the field of human rights, Myanmar acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011 and to the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2012, respectively. Preparations are underway to sign the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Furthermore, Myanmar is now actively studying the CAT.

Myanmar has been taking concrete steps to prevent underage military recruitment. Assistance have been provided to those who were discharged for their reintegration into the society. Furthermore, Myanmar is considering to sign the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

Mr. President,

As a member of ASEAN, Myanmar took the responsibility of the chair of the organization last year. ASEAN's strong commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights is reflected in the work of its own regional human rights body, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR).

Mr. President,

Cooperation with the United Nations is one of the cornerstones of our foreign policy. Despite our opposition, as a matter of principle, to the country-specific resolutions, we have regularly received the visits of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar. This clearly reflects our openness, engagement and cooperation with the United Nations.

Furthermore, we strongly believe that the Universal Periodic Review is a mechanism which meaningfully and effectively contributes to the promotion and protection of human rights in every country. Myanmar is now preparing its national report to be submitted in July this year for the second cycle of the UPR.

Mr. President,

The various achievements made by Myanmar throughout the years have been well received by the international community. Our progress in the area of promotion and protection of human rights is significant and continuing. We sincerely take pride in this development.

Taking this opportunity, I wish to express our deep appreciation to the Member States which have traditionally and consistently supported Myanmar. Nevertheless, a couple of countries have unreasonably set very high expectations on us. They have resorted to the act of moving the goal posts.

As you are aware, Myanmar's democracy is only four years old. Our nation is not alone facing challenges while endeavouring to broaden the democratic space. However, it is heartening to observe that our institutions and the general public have been incrementally gaining maturity through capacity-building, awareness-raising and civic education. Many democracies have reached their current status through years and years of transition. In this regard, Myanmar should be no exception. Please let us have sufficient space and time to shape our own future in the best interests of our own people.

Mr. President,

Myanmar is still being treated the same way as it was twenty years ago, regardless of the changes we have made, regardless of the progress we have achieved.

The people of Myanmar, especially the younger generation with their increasing awareness and knowledge of the outside world, are now questioning why this practice of double standards is being applied to us. These questions are getting louder and louder. If the same practice is allowed to continue in this room, views will increasingly become polarized. It is high time for this august body to address these concerns in a timely manner, with a view to ensuring an equal treatment to all Member States.

I thank you, Mr. President.
