

Appendix A

President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein addresses the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw First Regular Session on 30 March 2011

Mr. Speaker and representatives of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Allow me to extend my greetings and best wishes for your physical and spiritual well-being.

I have been elected as the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, accountable to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and to the Union Government of Myanmar. Accordingly it is my bounden duty to apprise you of the policies, principles and procedures of the newly formed Union Government.

First and foremost, I myself as well as all representatives have been duly elected by the people and are therefore the people's representatives, and as such it is our duty to honour, abide by and protect the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar which was approved and promulgated with the consent of the majority of the people.

Since this is our given duty, I would like to urge you that it is imperative for us to be faithful to, and cherish the democratic State that is to be established in accordance with the Constitution, and that we must pledge to sacrifice our life to protect it.

Esteemed representatives,

You know that our country was once under imperialist rule for many years but that through the united strength and endeavour of all the national races

we regained our independence at great cost of life. Regrettably after we had gained independence, instead of making every effort to reconstruct our nation, armed conflicts broke out among our kinsfolk and a good deal of blood has been shed due to ideological radicalism, factionalism and racism and the people have been adrift in a sea of suffering for nearly five decades.

Whenever the country's situation became chaotic and was on the verge of losing its independence and sovereignty, the Tatmadaw, dedicated to its pledge of duty and loyalty has had to intercede many times to save the country from total collapse. In 1988 also the Tatmadaw had to resolve and remove the lawlessness and disorderliness that erupted to rebuild the nation which had deteriorated in all aspects. It then laid sound and solid foundations as a legacy for us to carry on with the task of reconstructing a peaceful, modern and developed nation.

Hence, we can now walk the path laid down by the Tatmadaw Government and cross the bridge it has built, and in accordance with the mandate granted to us by the people, carry on the task of building a peaceful, stable and developed nation. In order to achieve this task and fulfill our duties, the new government which I head will lay down suitable policies and work programmes consistent with times and conditions.

Lessons from the historical past have proved time and again that the Three Main National Tasks of protecting the Union from disintegration, preventing the breakdown of national solidarity and of perpetuating national sovereignty are categorical imperatives which not only we must act by and live by but are also truths which all future generations are to abide by for all time for as long as the world shall exist. It is also the solemn pledge of the present government to do everything in our power to fulfill these worthy tasks.

However, in order to successfully fulfill these vital tasks there are three forces that need to be strong and they are:

- (1) The political forces
- (2) The economic forces
- (3) The national defence forces

Political force lies in national unity and solidarity. It is vital that national unity prevails in our country which is home to over 100 different ethnic races. If national unity crumbles, then inevitably our nation will collapse.

So, national unity takes priority and we must work to preserve it in the tasks that lie ahead.

Past experience has shown us that lip service and rhetoric are not enough to maintain and preserve national unity nor can it be realized at the negotiation table alone. Our ethnic kinsfolk are isolated from us by geographical factors which therefore require improved communications to overcome natural geographical barriers. Motor and railroads must be built, bridges constructed to improve connectivity to their regions. Moreover, there is an urgent need to enhance educational standards and health care and to build up economic infrastructure to raise the socio-economic life of our ethnic peoples.

The roads, bridges, schools and hospitals and clinics are the means by which the quality of their socio-economic life can be raised. The greater the number of motor and railroads and bridges, the better the communications and travel from place to place. As the saying goes “when people meet more frequently, it nurtures a sense of friendship and intimacy.” So when contacts between our peoples increase, relations improve and bonds of kinship become stronger. But, our goal is not only to strengthen and improve material well-being, but also to nurture and foster the Union Spirit which is the genuine spirit of patriotism that underpins national unity.

With regard to national reconciliation, to this day, there are those both at home and abroad, groups of individuals and organizations outside the law, who are unwilling to accept the seven-stage road map and the current Constitution. These individuals and organizations are all Myanmar citizens. They therefore need to reflect and consider the fact that Myanmar is their country and that the people are their people. They also need to look upon our government as their government composed at different levels with their own nationals.

In Chapter 12 of the Constitution there is a provision which states clearly that there is a vested right to amend the Constitution in accordance with prescribed procedures. So it is incumbent on them not to dishonour and belittle their country and their fellow citizens in speech and manner.

Inevitably there will be differences in outlook but where there is possibility of agreement there should be cooperation in the interest of the country. If only people would choose to stand for elections in keeping with democratic practices to earn the right to govern lawfully, it would be blessed in Heaven and on Earth. Our government therefore has kept the door to peace open and extends a welcoming hand to all.

The second force is the economic force which needs to be boosted and strengthened. A weak economy earns no respect and is looked down upon by others. The economy is also the link to politics. When the economy is strong, the basic needs of the people such as food, clothing and shelter will be fulfilled and they are assured of a better quality of life. There will be no cause for any form of instigation from internal or external sources.

Since our country's economy is mainly based on agriculture, successive governments have given priority to developing the agricultural sector. Hence there is not only food sufficiency but also a surplus. To fulfill the food requirements for the projected rise in population new irrigation canals, dams and river water pumping facilities have been built, so there is sound agricultural infrastructure and there is no need for concern regarding food sufficiency. But agriculture alone cannot make the country wealthy. Industrialization is required for the country to become modern, developed and prosperous – a country with many employment opportunities and high per capita income.

Our country has the natural resources to set up an industrialized nation, but we need capital and energy; we need human resources in the form of intellectuals, expert technicians and skilled artisans. We already have basic human resources to some extent so if we intensify our efforts, there is no way we can fail to realize these aims. Our government thus plans to make transition to an industrialized nation while simultaneously accelerating developments in the agricultural sector.

With regard to the National Defence Forces, in order to safeguard our independence and sovereignty, reinforcement and reconstitution should be an ongoing task from generation to generation. If the nation's defence forces are feeble and weak then the country will be at the mercy of other countries. Myanmar as a nation which had existed for many centuries as a Kingdom with its own monarch and palace and royalty ended with the Konbaung dynasty when the country was easily subjugated by British imperialist forces. This was because at the home Myanmar lacked a strong and modern armed force. If we should regard the nation's defence forces as trivial we shall have to experience a modern form of enslavement under the hegemony of others. We should be aware that our country occupies a strategic position both from the geo-political and economic point of view and is therefore vulnerable to manipulation and machination of neo-colonialists.

Hence the need for a strong and well equipped world-class armed force to protect the nation. We must all contribute towards capacity-building of the present Tatmadaw, by transforming it to be a strong, highly skilled, and modernized armed force imbued with true patriotic fervor. It is the duty of every citizen to protect and defend our country. This is the responsibility of all citizens.

The Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, which was approved by the majority of the people, has been promulgated and is now in force, and our government therefore will discharge our duties strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker and representatives,

In the economic sector, requisite infrastructure, laws, rules and procedures were enacted in past years for the establishment of a market-oriented economy. Constitutional reforms including those for privatization have been carried out. Further efforts must be made for the emergence of a distinctly tangible market economy by raising the future socio-economic [capacity] of the State and the people as well as undertaking appropriate policy reforms for implementation in the finance, monetary and revenue sectors.

The economic policy is to pursue and implement a market economy and every effort will be made to achieve success of the economic programmes. The key to economic success is the successful realization of a genuine market economy. In the process, we will ensure that all economic forces at the State and regional level and cooperatives and private enterprises will be included to work in harmony within the framework of the market economy. Furthermore we shall extend every encouragement and assistance to the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that play a key role in a developing nation such as ours.

The market economy that we aim for is for the development of the State and the people and we will therefore open doors, carry out reforms and invite investments as and when necessary. We will also make sure that the fruits and benefits thus generated will be distributed fairly right down to the grass roots level and thereby raise the socio-economic life of the entire peoples. In order to realize this aim of fair and equitable distribution of benefits to raise the quality of life for the people, we shall lay down appropriate policies and enact necessary laws.

In the international arena, there are many interpretations and views regarding the nature of the market economy and its methods and

procedures. In some countries a market economy is not subject to any regulations, but in others the government exerts control on the market to a certain extent. In our case we aim for a market economy subject to a certain degree of regulation by the government. Such regulation however is not meant to control the freedom of the market but to prevent monopoly and manipulation by capitalists, the rich and wealthy and the privileged. The market will be subject to a minimum amount of control only in the national interest with no other intervention whatsoever by the government.

In implementing these measures, we shall endeavour to establish a just and equitable market economy designed to reduce the gap between the rich and poor and between urban and rural life. To fulfill the nation's need for more employment opportunities and to increase technical know-how, more efforts will be made to persuade and invite foreign direct investments, set up industrial zones while extending assistance to domestic industries of local entrepreneurs to boost productivity.

The next point is that if we really wish for a modernized and fully developed nation and if we wish our economy to flourish and succeed, we must give priority to developing the industrial sectors. For this reason the Armed Forces Government made utmost efforts to lay the ground work aimed towards an industrialized nation. At present we are equipped to take the first step towards a modern industrialized nation and therefore possess the potential for further industrial development. So in our endeavours for the realization of an industrialized nation, we must utilize the wealth generated by the agricultural sector and together with domestic and foreign investments endeavour to set up a modern industrialized nation.

We are also committed to enhance the socio-economic life of the peasants and workers. We shall take great care to ensure that laws to protect the rights of peasants are updated in accord with changing times and conditions. We shall also take action to develop the agricultural sector, to ensure reasonable prices for agricultural produce and to raise their quality. We shall also try to open up job opportunities for casual labourers who lead a hand-to-mouth existence, stabilize commodity prices, provide job opportunities as well [as] welfare and social security for workers and labourers. We shall also adjust the minimum wage scale to the contemporary cost of living. In addition to making provisions for the rights and security for workers in the country, we shall also ensure that workers employed abroad enjoy their full legitimate rights. In short, since peasants and workers are the nation's majority, our Government with

unremitting effort will guarantee that they will reap benefits in proportion to their work and raise the standard of life to one of equity and social security where there need be no anxieties for the future.

Mr. Speaker and representatives,

In building a new modern, developed and democratic nation, we are in need of exceptional and superior human resources of intellectuals and technocrats. The development of the nation's entire human resources including those of new generations who will shoulder the duties of the country's future is essential. We must therefore raise the educational sector to meet international standards while simultaneously undertaking measures for human resource development as a whole.

In the education sector, 24 special development zones have been designated and in all the states and regions there are universities and colleges where students can avail themselves of higher education opportunities in their own states and regions. In basic education also there are many schools in rural areas. Efforts must be made not only to continue the present free education system at the primary school level, but it is also necessary to raise the educational standards in existing universities, colleges, high schools, middle schools and primary schools; to provide adequate teaching aids and other facilities, raise the intellectual capacity of teaching staff and promote the socio-economic life of the people and thereby encourage the rate of registration and attendance in middle and high schools. All this must be done if the education sector is to reach international standards.

To achieve all this we shall work in cooperation with international organizations, including United Nations organizations, international non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations within the country. We shall enact relevant laws to enable the private educational sector to systematically operate and provide educational services. In addition, scholarships will be made available for tertiary education abroad while providing stipends for outstanding students within the country.

With regard to the Health sector priority will be given to upgrade the quality of facilities in the larger hospitals that were set up and expanded within the last two decades while building up the capacity and proficiency of health-care workers. Promoting the standard of rural clinics and dispensaries as well as the skills of health-care employees are also on the agenda of things to be done. In implementing these measures we shall work

in cooperation with relevant organizations of the United Nations, other international organizations, international non-governmental organizations and local civil society organizations. We also intend to enact necessary laws for systematic function of private health-care enterprises. The aim of the State, the people and welfare organizations is to build up and expand systematic, efficient and effective basic health care services in cooperation. In our national programmes for the prevention and treatment of the three diseases of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria we shall work in closer cooperation with international organizations.

Mr. Speaker and representatives,

Another of our government's priorities is to ensure that our citizens in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution shall be able to enjoy their fundamental rights fully in the future democratic state. We shall provide protection for all citizens to be treated equally before the law and shall therefore build up a strong judiciary pillar. Moral turpitude debases not only the individual but also humiliates and brings dishonour on the State and the people and it is imperative that we, with the help of the people deter such malpractices effectively. Hence to ensure fulfillment of the basic rights or human rights of the people we shall if necessary amend or abrogate existing laws and enact and promulgate new laws. In order to take such measures it would be necessary to study and assess the situation as soon as possible and based on the findings submit them to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw for the enactment of necessary legislation.

Another task that we must tackle is environmental conservation. In carrying out this task, we must focus equally on all aspects including conservation of trees and forests, reduction of air and water pollution, management and control of industrial waste and conservation of wildlife. We shall lay down a policy that strikes a balance between economic development and the need for environmental conservation. We must also mobilize the people and welfare organizations to participate in environmental conservation activities. At the same time efforts will be made to undertake research into technology for renewable energy resources that are economical and can be used extensively. Top priority will be given to review legislation on environmental conservation and laws will be revised or supplemented or new laws enacted as necessary.

I therefore pledge that we shall give priority to the implementation of domestic policies by conserving the good conditions that we have inherited

and build upon them in order to achieve sustainable development; to create a Myanmar society of equity and unity and to guarantee the fundamental rights of her citizens.

To implement the domestic policies that I have just listed the Pyidaungsu Government will submit the following legislative programmes to the Hluttaws:

- (1) To amend any point of law not in accord with the provisions of the Constitution
- (2) To submit draft bills to fulfill the fundamental rights of citizens in accord with the provisions of the Constitution
- (3) To draft a bill authorizing increase in salaries of public service personnel and pensions granted to retired government employees according to time and circumstance
- (4) To study the possibility of compiling laws pertaining to the rights of farmers and to review existing laws for amendment in accordance with changing times
- (5) To review legislation pertaining to creation of job opportunities and protection of rights of workers for necessary amendments in accordance with changing times
- (6) To draft and submit a revised new bill on Public Health Care and Social Welfare in accordance with changing times
- (7) To draft for enactment Bills towards raising the standard of education and health
- (8) To amend laws of the fourth pillar concerning journalism and other media, that are no longer consistent with changing times, and enact new laws in accord with the provisions of the Constitution.
- (9) To enact laws necessary for conservation of the environment and to amend industrial and mining laws to meet the needs for environmental conservation.
- (10) To review and revise programmes for sustainable management of natural disasters and risk reduction and rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker and representatives,

Having presented some important aspects of our domestic policy I shall now proceed to put forward the foreign affairs policy of our country. There have been differences in the political, economic and ideological policies pursued by previous successive governments but in their foreign relations

they have all agreed upon and never deviated from the principles of a non-aligned, active and independent foreign policy and adherence to the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. So in Myanmar's foreign relations no government has ever aligned itself with any power bloc nor submitted to the influence of any Super Power; no government has ever allowed any foreign military force to set foot on Myanmar soil, nor have they ever committed acts of aggression against another nation or intervened in their internal affairs. Myanmar can take pride in the fact that in keeping with its foreign policy tradition it has never posed a threat to international or regional peace and security.

Our government will unswervingly adhere to this honourable foreign policy tradition and establish friendly relations with all countries. Moreover, Myanmar is committed to fulfilling her duties and participating fully as a member of international organizations including the United Nations, the ASEAN, BIMSTEC and other regional organizations and shall henceforth take her place as an esteemed member of the international community. So, to those countries that have been insisting that they wish to see a full-blown system of democracy in Myanmar and socio-economic development for her people, I would like to say, please acknowledge the positive changes and developments that have taken place in Myanmar and desist from their present tactics of exerting pressure, inciting and assisting anti-government groups and intimidating us from an economic vantage. Now is the time to choose the path to cooperation with our new government and I urge and invite these nations therefore to do so now.

Mr. Speaker and representatives,

From this day onwards we have started on our path to democratic reforms in Myanmar. We have taken the first step towards a multi-party democracy with the general elections but still many tasks lie ahead. Just as we need to make efforts for democracy in the State's legislative, executive and judicial sectors that are in accordance with the Constitution we must also work further to establish cooperation and mutual understanding between the Pyidaungsu Government (Union Government) and the Regional/State governments as well as between the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and the Regional/State hluttaws. There is also the need for confidence building measures among the representatives of the legislative assemblies at different levels. Concerning those who still harbour reservations about the Seven-Stage Road Map and are reluctant to accept the Constitution, we must be

able to demonstrate our genuine good will and sincerity to remove such lingering doubts so that they will participate wholeheartedly and give their cooperation in the interest of the nation. We also need to show and convince those few nations that are still skeptical of our democratization process that we are genuinely committed to the building of a fully democratic nation.

In the process of a transition towards a democracy we need to nurture and develop understanding of democratic principles and practices not only in our representatives but in the people as well. In implementing such measures our government pledges to work in cooperation with political parties within the Hluttaw, with political forces of genuine good will outside the Hluttaw and with all civil societies and organizations. I urge all those who are dedicated to the welfare and interest of the people to work within the framework of the Constitution and not to obstruct the democratic process and rule of law and destroy peace and stability. The Pyidaungsu Government will welcome all efforts made within the bounds of the Constitution for the welfare of the country and the people, but will not hesitate to take appropriate action to prevent any moves made that contravene the provisions of the Constitution.

A democracy can succeed only together with good governance. Hence our government which must carry out assigned tasks during the period of transition to a democracy must give priority to establishing a system of good governance.

Mr. Speaker and representatives,

In Myanmar today the onus of successfully building a system of democracy that balances responsibility and freedom lie on our shoulders. The people have bestowed this task on the representatives of this Hluttaw with full trust and confidence. Likewise, the representatives of this Hluttaw have entrusted the task of the executive branch to me and the Pyidaungsu Government. To successfully carry out these onerous duties successfully we must all work together in full cooperation.

To the political parties in the Hluttaw, I would like to suggest that in carrying out our tasks we may have differing views but that we should find ways to work together in cooperation since we are all agreed that we are working in the interest of the nation. Similarly the Hluttaw members of different political parties in keeping with democratic practices should abide by the decision of the majority and respect the desire of the minority

in their legislative functions. This is crucial because it is now time for us to relinquish what has become a dogma in Myanmar political tradition, that the party in power and the opposition are adversaries or antagonists; we should instead consider ourselves as colleagues working hand in hand for the national good.

For a country to have the benefit of development, stability and peace, the government machinery must function authoritatively and effectively in all parts of the country. And just as the government's authority within the country should be unconditional, so also its stature in the international community needs to be one of dignity and integrity. Hence it is essential to overhaul and restore the entire government machinery to working condition in accord with contemporary standards and make it strong and robust.

Mr. Speaker and representatives,

The Government of the Peace and Development Council beginning from 1988 to this period laid down the requisite economic, political and social foundations for the establishment of a future democratic state. We, on our part, bear the responsibility to continue these efforts for a future democracy. We wish therefore to tender our thanks to the people, members of the armed forces and government personnel who toiled to lay strong foundations for peace, rule of law and development necessary for a future democratic state. I also urge the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to record these achievements for posterity.

In conclusion we solemnly vow to the people who overwhelmingly elected us that we shall value the trust put in us and that we shall unremittingly do our duty by the State and by the people; that we shall endeavour to the best of our ability to build a better state and a better life for the people – a democratic state that will endure, where justice, freedom and equality shall prevail. In making this pledge I wish to appeal to all to join and work with us in unity in the interest and progress of our country.

Speech — March 30, 2011

Translation — Kyi Kyi Hla