



MYANMAR

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Statement by

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the Union of Myanmar

**in the General Debate of the 63rd session of
the United Nations General Assembly**

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Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate you on your election as the President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The Myanmar Delegation is confident that your vast experience and diplomatic skills will stand the Assembly in good stead.

I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Dr. Srgjan Kerim for his dynamic and able leadership of the previous session.

Mr. President,

We live in an era when the world is becoming increasingly interdependent. Nothing illustrates this interdependency more than the Asian financial crisis of a decade ago and the current financial crisis gripping the world's largest economy. The problems may have local roots but given the severity of the situation, their effects will transcend borders. The world economy, and by extension the stability of nations, depends on stability of the financial markets.

In recent months, the world has also been challenged by the soaring prices of fuel and food, particularly such staples as rice. These daunting challenges add an extra burden to developing countries. The answer to these problems lies not in multiplying the number of world summits and conferences but by concrete actions in implementing the commitments made.

My own country has the potential to contribute to energy and food security of our region. We are willing to do our part. We are making concerted efforts to produce more crude oil and natural gas to meet the needs of the domestic market as well as for export. We also have huge potential for hydro-electric power. Moreover, as the agriculture sector is the mainstay of Myanmar's economy, we are focusing on expanding the cultivation of paddy, beans and pulses. We have also introduced new industrial crops, such as jetropha (physics nut) for use in the production of bio-fuels.

Developing countries, like my own, need to have a level playing field in order to promote economic prosperity and social progress of our peoples. Subsidies and protectionist policies distort markets and do great harm to developing countries.

Mr. President,

Political and social progress can only be achieved through development, never through coercive economic measures. Such measures only serve to worsen the plight of the people, particularly the most vulnerable among them, women and children.

Unilateral sanctions have been imposed on my country. These sanctions are unwarranted. Unilateral sanctions are also against international law. They are not only unfair but immoral. They are counter-productive and deprive the countries of their right to development.

Myanmar has abundant land and natural resources to be able to make a meaningful contribution to energy and food security of our country and beyond. In order for us to fulfill our potential we need unfettered access to markets. We need modern technology. We need investment. The sooner the unjust sanctions are revoked and the barriers removed, the sooner will the country be in a position to become the rice bowl of the region and a reliable source of energy.

Mr. President,

This brings me to the matter of making the United Nations an organization better suited to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Only a more democratic organization will be able to respond to the needs of Member States and serve the interest of the international community as a whole. The reform of the Organization, particularly the reform of the Security Council, has been on our agenda for some time. Progress, however, has been extremely slow.

The role and authority of the General Assembly as the principal deliberative and representative organ must be enhanced, including in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The reform of the Security Council has eluded us for over a decade. Myanmar believes that the membership of the Security Council should reflect the current reality. We believe in the increase in the membership of both the permanent and the elected categories in the Council. The reform should not be confined only to the increase in membership but must also improve its working methods. Above all, it should result in a Security Council that is transparent, credible and democratic.

Here, I would like to stress that attempts to initiate formal or informal discussions in the Security Council on situations that do not constitute a threat to international peace and security are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Charter. This is a view that Myanmar shares with the Non-Aligned Movement which constitutes a clear majority of the Membership of our Organization.

Mr. President,

The Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000 are imperatives that the international community has set for itself. We have now passed the mid-point but progress has been uneven. Much more remains to be done if the goals are to be achieved by 2015. While national governments have the primary responsibility to ensure progress, the international community must help by creating an environment that would enable developing countries to turn faltering steps at development into firm strides.

It is time for commitments made at international summits and conferences to be translated into concrete action. Fulfillment of the ODA commitments, increased investment flows, market access and resolution of the debt problem are needed to enable the developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

For its part, Myanmar is striving to promote better living standards for its people. The implementation of MDGs is inextricably linked with the implementation of our National Development Plan. The national plan focuses on the promotion of equitable and balanced socio-economic development of both rural and urban areas. In recent years, we have made significant progress in areas, such as poverty alleviation, promotion of health and education.

In the health sector, Myanmar has been implementing a national plan that accords priority to eradication of major diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. A high-level multi-sectoral Committee on AIDS has been overseeing HIV/AIDS prevention and care activities in the country since 1989. The activities undertaken by the Committee include active surveillance, prevention of mother-to-child transmission as well as community, institution and home-based care services. These activities are carried out by the Government in close

cooperation with international organizations such as WHO, UNICEF, the World Food Programme, national and international NGOs in order to reach out widely to vulnerable groups.

As a result, Myanmar has not only leveled the rate of HIV/AIDS infection but also reduced it. I would like to emphasize that if we are to have a more dynamic and effective global response to HIV/AIDS, adequate resources must be made available. Moreover, allocation of resources for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis must be on need basis rather than on political consideration.

Mr. President,

With regard to education, we envision a system for our people that will generate a learning society capable of meeting the challenges of the information age we live in. Long-term investment in the education sector is being made with the aim of building human resource development. The Government has been expanding the number of basic, primary, post-primary, middle and high schools throughout the country providing access to education for all. We strongly believe good education to be a fundamental requirement for attainment of sustainable development. It is a prerequisite for the achievement of other MDGs.

I am happy to be able to say that as a result of our efforts, the literacy rate, of 15-year-olds and above, has risen to 94.8 %. Likewise, the enrollment rate in primary schools has reached 98%.

Mr. President,

Myanmar also accords priority to creating job opportunities in rural areas as part of its poverty alleviation strategy. In this regard, development projects to improve economic, educational and health conditions for rural areas are being implemented all over the country.

Mr. President,

The Secretary-General's initiative to convene a Ministerial meeting on "Reducing Disaster Risks in a Changing Climate" is indeed timely. We in Myanmar can relate to the growing concern of the world regarding climate change and its adverse effects. We felt the full brunt of the devastating consequences of climate change last May when a powerful cyclone slammed into the Ayeyarwaddy delta. Cyclone Nargis left unprecedented death and destruction in its wake. The pain and sorrow felt by the survivors of the devastating storm continue even today. There is however a silver lining in the dark clouds. The Myanmar nation was united in its response to the emergency. The outpouring of generosity was overwhelming. People from all walks of life, regardless of their own difficulties, donated cash and kind for the victims. The United Nations, the ASEAN Member States, donor countries, NGOs and individuals from around the world also responded generously. We have been able to demonstrate willingness and ability to work in concert with the international community. We have been able to rebuild better and stronger homes, schools and monasteries. The paddy fields destroyed by the storm have been replanted.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation to our friends, from far and near, who came to our assistance in our time of need.

An international pledging conference was organized in Yangon by the Government, the United Nations and ASEAN soon after the natural disaster. Following the conference, a tripartite group composed of the Government of Myanmar, the United Nations and ASEAN was established to coordinate relief efforts and to conduct a post -cyclone joint assessment. The Group has come up with a report that describes at length the extent of the destruction caused by the storm, its impact on the affected region and the scope and scale of the humanitarian assistance that would be needed in the medium and long term. The report acknowledges the prompt and systematic response of the Government and people of Myanmar to the disaster. The effective cooperation between the Government and international organizations and NGOs is widely regarded as a model for effective cooperation in case of natural disasters.

Mr. President,

Myanmar is home to over 100 national races and national unity is of paramount importance. Accordingly, we have been resolutely pursuing a policy of national reconciliation. Our endeavours have resulted in the return to the legal fold of 17 armed groups. We have effectively put an end to the decades-long insurgency. Peace and stability now prevails in almost all parts of the country.

We have also been implementing a 7-step political roadmap to democracy. The representatives of former armed groups together with the representatives of political parties, ethnic nationalities and other representatives took an active part in the National Convention process. The National Convention laid down the fundamental principles to be enshrined in a new Constitution. Based on those principles, a new Constitution was drafted and put to a nation-wide referendum last May. The people of Myanmar overwhelmingly approved the draft Constitution.

The 5th step of the roadmap, general elections, will be held in 2010. Necessary measures are being undertaken for the elections. All citizens, regardless of political affiliation, will have equal rights to form political parties and to conduct election campaigns.

The Government will make every effort to ensure that the elections will be free and fair.

The international community can best assist Myanmar's democratization process by respecting the will of its people expressed in the recent referendum.

Mr. President,

The daunting challenges of the 21st century could only be addressed through international cooperation. We can only solve the international problems of economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character by working together. To do this, powerful countries should refrain from practicing hegemonic policies, either through political or economic pressures.

In the global village that we live, mutual respect, understanding and tolerance must be the values that we espouse. As we face environmental issues including the climate change that wrought great devastation to peoples in various regions around the world, we need a united response to overcome them. Let us work together to give our global village a peaceful and prosperous future.

I thank you.