

(Myanmar)U Aung Kyi Nyunt's Speech

Theme: Human rights abuses as precursors of conflict: Parliaments as early responders

Honorable President, Secretary General, Fellow MPs, Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first introduce myself, I am U Aung Kyi Nyunt, a member of the Amyotha Hluttaw or the House of Nationalities of the Myanmar Union Assembly. I am also the Deputy Chair of the Joint Coordination Committee on Hluttaw Development and a member of the Amyotha Bills Committee. It is an honor to be here at my first IPU Assembly and to speak before you.

I wish to state clearly, at the very beginning of my speech that I am personally committed to both human rights and the rule of law, and not just in theory. I have personally suffered for daring to speak out for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Promoting these issues was one of the reasons for my entering politics. These unwavering beliefs are, as you know, shared by the State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and the party which I represent in Parliament, the National League for Democracy. Throughout my speech I will be drawing on reflections that she has made at the recent UN General Assembly and the 37th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly held in Nay Pyi Taw, that are relevant to this topic.

'In 1948, when Burma became independent, we established parliamentary democracy. At that time, we could say that we are one of the foremost countries in Asia to have adopted parliamentary democracy. However, the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Time and Chance happen to us all. Time and Chance happened to us and we lost our parliamentary democratic

system. But through commitment, drive and perseverance we have once again started out on the road to establishment of the parliamentary democracy that truly reflects that will of the people.’ The new Parliament commenced on 1st February 2016 and the new government took office on 1st April. We propose to make our parliament one that is people oriented and protects and entrenches human rights and the rule of law.

At national level various laws protecting human rights have been enacted since 2011. These include law protecting the rights of the disabled and workers; providing social security to the poor; and introducing a schemes to introduce legal aid and fight corruption. The National Human Rights Commission was established and more Bills and Amendments which will further protect and entrench the rights of the people of Myanmar are in the pipeline.

It is a fact that all countries face challenges in addressing human rights issues particularly for marginalized and weak. As I have noted, parliament through its respective roles of representation, law-making and oversight can play a key role in identifying and addressing and responding early to human rights issues.

As MPs we are supporting this process by working to build understanding, harmony and trust between communities, while standing firm against prejudice, intolerance and extremism. We have the opportunity to ensure that the action taken by both Union and Regional and State governments is relevant and appropriate and that the respective budgets allocate sufficient funds to address the root causes and to provide access to government services which are often lacking. We must not look away when human rights problems appears, but move swiftly to address them as soon as they appear. We must listen to all voices, even

marginalized ones, and we should never forget that since women are 51% of our population, their voices should also be heard in any solution.

At the same time, we are pursuing our international obligations. For example, Parliament will soon consider the ratification of the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children. In doing so, the constructive and active cooperation between our executive and our legislature has been invaluable.

‘Today our world is more connected than ever, and no country or people can or should stand alone. The opportunities and challenges that we face cannot be realized or overcome without international cooperation. And this cooperation must be across all the pillars of government – executive, judicial, and of course legislative.’ As an elected member we have a leadership role – a role that should transcend and inform each of respective functions and ensure that through our work we build communities where giving is truly more valued than receiving, where respect replaces scorn and which places fundamental human rights and human dignity at the heart of all policies and actions.

Thank you, Ladies and Gentleman.