



# Peace, Prosperity and Democracy

Republic of the Union of Myanmar











# Peace, Prosperity and Democracy

In March 2016, Myanmar's democratically elected government took office following the country's first truly free and fair elections in 50 years.

**The government today has a clear vision: to build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Myanmar.**

We inherited a country that had endured decades of civil war and was suffering from years of underdevelopment, social and political stagnation.

**Peace:** We have made peace and national reconciliation our priority, with the aim of establishing a democratic federal union.

**Prosperity:** At the same time, we have set about rebuilding our economy, opening Myanmar to the world and making health and education the cornerstones of our development.

**Democracy:** And we have begun reforming our public institutions and strengthening the rule of law to create a fair and just society for all our people.

Just over eighteen months since the government took office, and we have already achieved a great deal - from launching our new national health and education strategies to stabilising the economy and laying the foundations for future growth.

Democratic change doesn't happen overnight, it is a hard fought process. As the State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi told the nation upon taking office, the 2015 elections were just the beginning of Myanmar's journey towards democracy, not the end.

And while there is much still to do, we must remember how far we have come.





# Peace

## Reconciliation, not retribution

Myanmar has endured almost 70 years of armed conflict. It is one of the world's longest-running civil wars and has caused immense suffering on all sides.

Our greatest national endeavour is to forge a lasting peace for all our people. It is our firm belief that only then will we succeed in building a truly democratic nation.

Without peace, security and stability, the country will not be able to move forward to genuine democracy with shared prosperity for all.

Our vision is of a democratic, federal union based on the principles of freedom, equal rights and self-determination.

The new government has made the peace process its priority and has started an inclusive dialogue.

In her first major speech following the transfer of power, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi made clear the government would aim to bring remaining organisations into the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, and "through peace conferences, we'll continue to be able to build up a genuine, federal democratic union".

To help achieve this and establish a regular timetable for dialogue, the government established the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference to take place twice a year.

The first Panglong Peace Conference held in 2016 was the most inclusive peace conference in our nation's history.

The second took place in May 2017 and brought together over 700 participants from across the government, military, parliament, political parties, ethnic armed groups and ethnic national groups. It established an agreement on 37 basic principles for a future democratic union covering political, economic, social, land and environmental points.

While there is still much to be done, progress is being made and the Panglong conferences place a new focus on dialogue and finding political solutions to Myanmar's challenges.

### Why Panglong?

In 1947, leaders from the Chin, Shan and Kachin ethnic groups met with General Aung San, the head of the interim government and father of current State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, in Panglong, Shan State, and agreed in principle to form a union of Myanmar.

For many in Myanmar, this Panglong agreement is a defining moment in the struggle to bring together the country's many ethnic groups. 2017 marked the 70th anniversary of the 1947 Panglong agreement, which is celebrated annually as Union Day.

It is in this spirit of unity and reconciliation that the government is seeking to move forward Myanmar's peace process.

# Prosperity

## Freedom to flourish and prosper

Decades of mismanagement and isolation left the government with a sharply deteriorating economy upon taking office.

Through hard work, patience, and tough decisions, the foundations for future growth have been built.

It is now time for the economy to truly take off, creating a more prosperous future for all our people. The government's long-term economic plan will take time but will bring prosperity in which all can share.

### We have already achieved a great deal:

- Passing a new Investment Law that increases transparency and makes it easier and safer for domestic and international investors to operate in Myanmar.
- Increasing financial inclusion through liberalizing the market for microfinance firms and the introduction of mobile money.
- Supporting SMEs and entrepreneurs through new loan programs in collaboration with development partners and local banks.
- Selling the country's first ever treasury bills and bonds, to the tune of \$1 billion, and floating the Myanmar kyat to increase competitiveness and remove distortion.
- Strengthening governance and rule of law, to weed out ad hoc policies and corruption.

These actions have been supported by major investments in education and health across the country, which will be the cornerstones for Myanmar's development.

### Mobile money in Myanmar

Introducing mobile money was one of the government's first acts upon taking office. In its first 10 months, it attracted 500,000 customers with nearly three million transactions, and an agent network of over 10,000 locations countrywide.





# Spotlight on health and education

## The cornerstones of future prosperity



### Education

Education will support Myanmar's democracy- and peace-building process and help establish a prosperous, dynamic economy.

In channelling more resources into education, Myanmar is building a 21st century education system that will propel us to the rank of the upper-middle-income nations by 2030.

The government is reforming the national education system to ensure that all citizens achieve minimum national learning standards, learn how to think critically and creatively, and gain leadership skills that enable them to help others in their communities.

As a roadmap for reform, the government has developed a fully-costed National Strategic Education Plan (NESP), which was launched in February 2017.

The plan will see a doubling of investment in education across the country by 2021, increasing access to education and improving the standard of teaching nation-wide.

### Health

We are committed to transforming our healthcare system so that millions more people can live better and for longer.

Our overarching goal is to achieve Universal Health Coverage in Myanmar by 2030. Everyone, regardless of their social or economic circumstances, will have access to the health services they need without financial hardship.

Our fully-costed National Health Plan (NHP) is the roadmap for achieving this. It will extend access to a Basic Essential Package of Health Services to the whole country by 2020/21. By expanding basic health care access to the country's poorest first, the government aims to create a fairer system that benefits the many and not just the few.

The government is working closely with partners – both nationally and internationally – to ensure the successful delivery of the NHP.

The government has also launched a new cross-government effort to tackle malnutrition and stunting in Myanmar. This year, the government will undertake a ground-breaking study to compile the first comprehensive and accurate data on nutrition in Myanmar, and form the basis for a national nutrition plan.







# Democracy

## A fair and just society

To support the development of a strong and inclusive democracy, we are strengthening governance and reforming our public institutions to create a fair and just society for all our people.

Last year, the state parliament enacted, amended and revoked a total of 20 laws. This will have lasting benefits for the country and included introducing new laws to grant rights of peaceful assembly.

The legacy of decades of non-democratic rule cannot be undone overnight. Many challenges remain, but we have already taken significant steps. We are proud that today there are over 30 independent media organisations and correspondents from 20 international outlets in Myanmar, as well as almost 900 NGOs and INGOs working on issues from women's rights to local development.

We are also working hard to improve the rule of law, stamping out corruption and strengthening our civil and democratic institutions. We have made clean government a priority, launching an anti-corruption campaign, introducing new legislation and improving corporate transparency.

We are also transforming our police force into a modern service in line with international standards, strengthening capabilities and working to build trust among the public. And we are working with our judiciary to enhance its integrity and transparency through training, codes of conduct and disciplinary measures.

But all this requires a change in mind-set not just behaviour. That is why we are working to build understanding across our institutions and civil society.

Over the past year, we have worked with international partners to raise awareness and build capacity on areas including core human rights conventions as we seek to strengthen our democratic values and norms in line with international standards and support our reintegration into the international community.

### Press freedom

The government is committed to ensuring greater freedoms for our people – starting with political and media freedom. After years where free speech was restricted and state-controlled media was all that was allowed, Myanmar now has a growing private media sector and has introduced new laws that grant rights of peaceful assembly.

The government recognises concerns regarding section 66d of the Telecommunications Law. Myanmar's parliament recently approved amendments to the law that bring greater clarity and definition to the provisions. Legislative change takes time but we are committed to building a more open and free society. It also needs to ensure that press freedom come with accountability at this nascent transition.



# Spotlight on democratic reform

## Improving and safeguarding rights

### Gender equality

We are working hard to put gender equality and women's empowerment at the heart of our national development. We have committed to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Millennium Development Goals.

Our 10-year national strategic plan for the advancement of women covers key areas of the UN agenda for women's empowerment. Through advances in the fields of healthcare and education, we are also addressing issues including maternal and infant mortality rates and access to education.

### Forced labour

Myanmar has made significant progress in eliminating the practice of forced labour and is carrying out reforms of our labour laws. As part of our reform programme, a total of 12 domestic laws have been amended or enacted since 2012. Discussions are underway with the ILO on a Draft Action Plan on Forced Labour Elimination in Myanmar.

Earlier this year we launched a new Early Childhood Intervention Strategy together with UNICEF and the Leprosy Mission Myanmar to help safeguard the welfare of disabled children. Work is currently underway on a new law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### Disability rights

The government has stepped up its efforts to improve and safeguard the rights of disabled people in Myanmar. In 2016, we adopted a new National Strategy for the Development of Persons with Disabilities.

### Trafficking in persons

Myanmar has made significant efforts to combat trafficking in persons, focusing on prevention, protection and prosecution. There is still much to do, but progress has been made and our achievements are reflected by our upgraded status in the 2017 United States Trafficking in Persons report. Progress has been made in areas including, the elimination of the use and recruitment of child soldiers; an increase in personnel dedicated to anti-trafficking law enforcement units; increased regional cooperation on trafficking issues; and the first trafficking prosecutions of officials since the enactment of the 2005 Anti Trafficking in Persons law. We have also worked hard to identify victims and at-risk individuals and have appointed trafficking caseworkers to all social welfare offices throughout the country.

### Child rights

The government is committed to improving child protection and strengthening children's rights in Myanmar. Through reforms in the fields of education and healthcare, we are improving access to healthcare and expanding free school programs to help keep children in school. Significant progress has been made in eliminating the use and recruitment of child soldiers. It was reflected by removal of Myanmar from 2017 Child Soldiers Prevention Act List by the United States. We are currently reviewing the existing Child Law (1993) in conjunction with civil society and the UNICEF and a new 'Rights of the Child Law' is making its way through parliament.







# The Situation in Rakhine State



Since coming to office, the government has made addressing the situation in Rakhine one of its first priorities. We are painfully aware of the challenges facing the State and the urgent need for lasting and meaningful solutions.

To that end, the government on its own volition has set up the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State led by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan who has sought to find a constructive path forward. The Commission delivered its final report on 24 August. The government will now give the report its full consideration with a view to carrying out the recommendations to the fullest extent, and within the shortest timeframe possible, in line with the situation on the ground.

In its report, the Commission recognises that the situation in Rakhine is deeply complex and challenging and there are no quick fixes. Decades of

fear and distrust between the Muslim and Rakhine communities have been compounded by chronic underdevelopment - Rakhine is one of Myanmar's poorest states. This has only been made worse by the recent escalation of violence in that region ignited by the fresh coordinated attacks against 30 border police posts on 25 August 2017.

To provide long-term and sustainable solutions for Rakhine, within weeks of taking office the State Counsellor formed the Central Committee on Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development of the Rakhine State, responsible for coordinating with government ministries and international partners.

While there is much still to do, progress has been made and a number of recommendations made in the interim report of the Rakhine Advisory Commission have already been implemented.



## Progress highlights:

- Prior to the fresh violence on 25 August, humanitarian aid reached 95 per cent of affected areas. Currently, effective measures are being put in place by the government to provide humanitarian assistance to all those affected since 25 August 2017 by terrorist attacks.
- The government has provided over USD 1.96 million in humanitarian assistance to both communities, including cash, food, clothing, household items, tents, radios, motor vehicles, and solar panels.
- Healthcare access has been improved through new mobile clinics. We have upgraded schools and vocational and technical training programmes have begun.
- Hundreds of new jobs and opportunities have been created for local people through public-private partnerships and we are also assessing the viability of a new Special Economic Zone that would bring new jobs and businesses to the region.
- In terms of new infrastructure, electrification has been expanded and new roads and bridges built, including a new highway connecting remote areas previously only accessible by boat.
- We are working to promote religious harmony and communal relations by engaging interfaith groups. We plan to introduce a new curriculum in schools with a focus on moral, civic and peace education.
- We have developed a strategy and timeline to move forward the National Verification Process, as well as a strategy to close IDP camps in Rakhine State. Three IDP camps have been closed, and new houses are being built near the IDP camps.
- A new FM radio channel, which broadcasts in Rakhine, Bengali, and Myanmar languages, has been set up to provide information, including on health care and the National Verification Process to all communities in Rakhine. Cooperation of the communities is essential for the progress of the national verification process.
- In cooperation with the EU and UN bodies, we are providing training and capacity building for police and security forces in the areas of human rights, child protection and gender-based violence.





## Challenges

But the challenges should not be underestimated. There has been a disturbing increase in violence and unrest in the Rakhine State over recent months due to provocative attacks.

There is worrying evidence – independently verified – of external interference aimed at aggravating an already difficult situation for their own political agenda.

Most recently, the August attacks on security forces by extremists led to the death of policemen and security personnel as well as innocent civilians that include many other ethnic groups residing peacefully in Rakhine. A terrorist group called ARSA claimed responsibility for the coordinated attacks.

The brutal attacks coincided with the release of the final report by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. It is clear that they were a calculated attempt to undermine the efforts of those seeking to build peace and harmony in the region.

It was also a part of their strategy to attract the world's attention to the issue at the United Nations. Fresh fightings have led to displacements and sufferings of both communities. It involves human rights of both communities with deep-rooted mistrust and fears. Unbalanced reportings are also fuelling the flames.

These are longstanding and complex issues that will not be resolved overnight – but the government is firm in its commitment to finding meaningful and lasting solutions.

We must not allow our work to be derailed. Now more than ever, our focus must be on resolving, and not inflaming, the issues in Rakhine. Through implementation of the Advisory Commission's recommendations, we are working to change mindsets and build trust between these communities so that tolerance, respect, and eventually peace, may take hold.

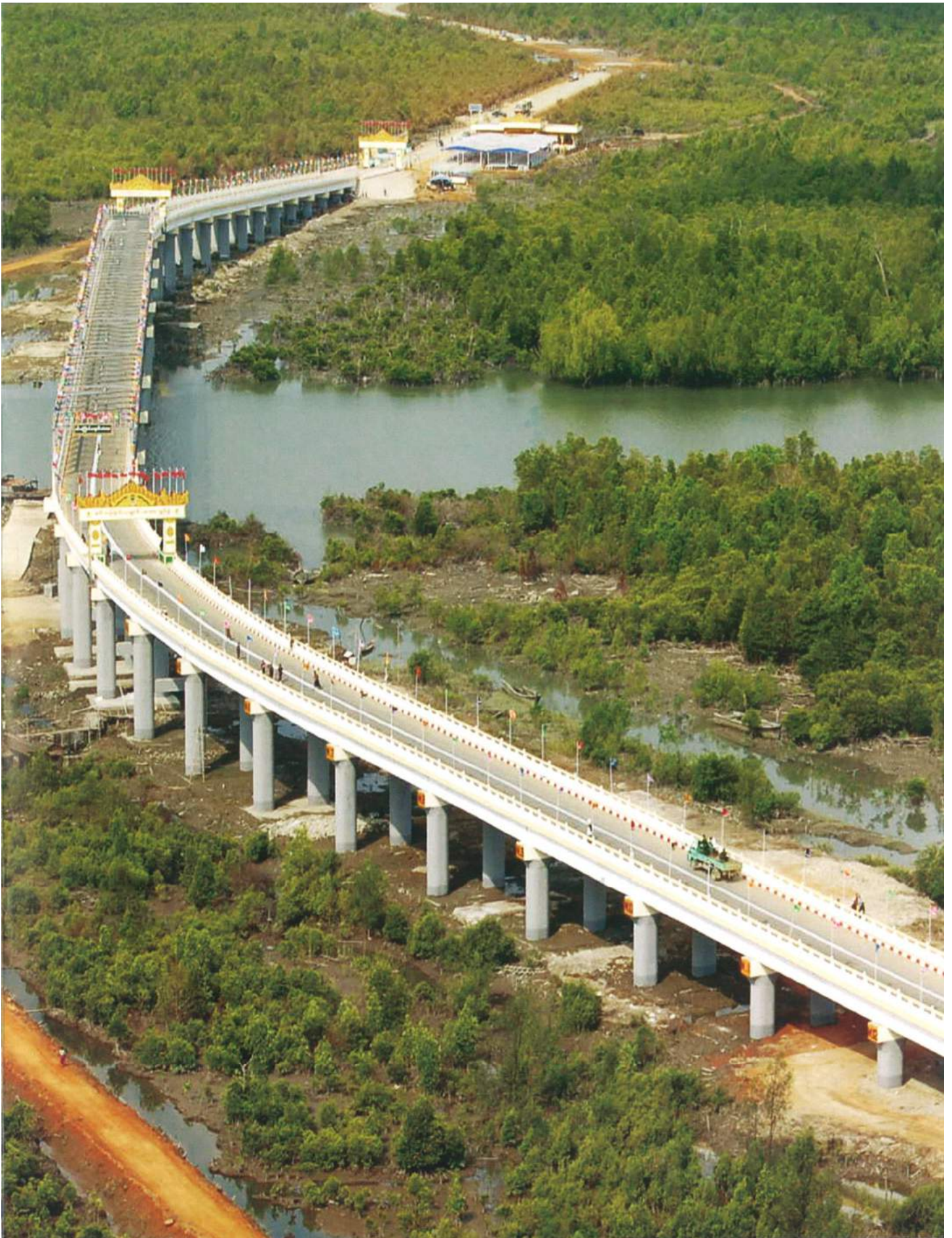
We must also remember that the situation in Rakhine cannot be seen in isolation.

Many challenges remain across our fragile new democracy – not least the challenge of forging a lasting peace after decades of ethnic strife and conflict. We have achieved a great deal, but there are difficulties that cannot be transformed overnight.

We ask only that the international community continue to support us and provide the time and space we need, as we strive to build a peaceful, prosperous, democratic and united Myanmar.









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