

## POLITICAL MONITOR NO.37

### OFFICIAL MEDIA

#### **UNION PEACE-MAKING WORK COMMITTEE AND ETHNIC ARMED GROUPS HOLD HISTORIC MEETINGS LAIZA & MYITKYINA**

The Union Peace-making Work Committee (UPWC) and leaders and representatives of ethnic armed organizations held talks from 4-5 November in Myitkyina, the Kachin State capital, where they discussed and submitted proposals regarding the nationwide ceasefire accord.

In his address, UPWC Vice-Chair Aung Min said that the negotiation was the first ever dialogue on armed conflicts between the government and ethnic armed groups. He said that both sides are keen to end the armed conflict through political means, although it was difficult to hold peace talks simultaneously with the many armed groups. He expressed his hope that the negotiation would bear positive results and further strengthen the on-going peace process. Aung Min also said that the political dialogue would be based on a framework adopted by common consent and the government would welcome the participation of ethnic armed groups and other major political forces and would listen to the voices of community-based organizations.

Commander-in-Chief Office of the Army Lt-Gen Myint Soe said he was glad to see ethnic armed groups at the negotiation table and that the army is committed to the peace process and confident that the negotiations would lead to achieving ceasefire and peace. KNU leader Mutu Sae Poe said that the KNU had realized that conflicts cannot be solved on the battleground and thus accepted the government's peace-making process to end decades of fighting. He said the KNU leadership had made its position clear regarding the peace process and to that end wanted to discuss further to achieve internal peace.

At the end of the 2-day talks, the two sides issued a joint statement, in which they agreed to sign a nationwide ceasefire, negotiate a framework for a political dialogue with all stakeholders, and initiate the political dialogue. The next round of talks will be held in Hpa-an, Karen State in December. *(Please see Appendix A for the full text of press release).*

The talks in Myitkyina came after ethnic leaders met in Laiza, the KIO headquarters from 30 October to 2 November. The main issues of the Laiza meeting included political dialogue with the government, signing a nationwide ceasefire and adopting the framework for a political dialogue worked out in the last 18 months amongst the ethnic armed group representative. Based on this a common position towards a nationwide ceasefire was adopted and signed by all the groups. The conference also agreed to form a 13-member joint peace negotiation team that will represent the ethnic armed groups in negotiations with the government peace delegation.<sup>1</sup>

#### **PRESIDENT SENDS MESSAGE TO LAIZA CONFERENCE**

In an official letter dated 29 October, President Thein Sein called on leaders of ethnic armed groups to work with the government in building peace and unity and in realizing non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty of the nation. He said that he strongly believed that resolutions, agreements and future tasks that come out from the

---

<sup>1</sup> Union Peace-making Work Committee meets leaders, reps of ethnic armed Organizations – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-05-red.pdf> (NLM) 5 November 2013 (p. 16 & 9) /  
Talks between UPWC and ethnic armed organizations conclude – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-06-red.pdf> (NLM) 6 November 2013 (p. 8 & 9) /  
Press release on peace talks between Union Peace-making Work Committee and ethnic armed organizations for nationwide ceasefire – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-06-red.pdf> (NLM) 6 November 2013 (p. 1)

meeting would help support signing a nation-wide ceasefire agreement, setting a framework for political dialogue and building peace through political dialogues for the restoration of peace in the Union. The President's letter was sent to the conference in Laiza, the headquarters of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO). *(Please see Appendix B for the full text of President's message).*<sup>2</sup>

### **THEIN SEIN'S ADDRESSES NATION ON CEASEFIRE DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT**

In his monthly radio speech to the nation on 1 November, President Thein Sein assured ethnic leaders that the government is committed to the peace process and stated that the Laiza peace conference will pave the way for the successful inauguration of the political dialogue process.

Thein Sein said that the goal of the nationwide cease-fire agreement is to provide a stepping stone to negotiations that would grant the ethnic groups a greater voice in the ongoing political reforms and transition to democracy after five decades of military rule. He also emphasized the need to be "practical" in any efforts to amend Burma's constitution, which was adopted in 2008 under the former military junta, saying that calls for reforms of the charter should take into account "possible consequences for the nation's future," and to avoid taking extreme measures when dealing with constitutional amendment.

Regarding the communal unrests, the President urged the communal leaders to work with each other to find solution through dialogue, while placing emphasis on maintaining law and order and regional stability. In conclusion, the President called on the people to work together to make sure on the basis of such hopes and determinations that the political and other reform processes are viable and to improve the social and economic welfare of the people by creating a better and brighter future for the younger generation. *(Please see Annex C for the full text of President's speech).*<sup>3</sup>

### **INDIAN ARMY CHIEF VISITS BURMA**

President Thein Sein received the Chief of the Army Staff of the Indian Army General Bikram Singh in Naypyitaw on 30 October. The two leaders discussed India's assistance to Burma in the development of human resources, scholarships and training of Burmese armed forces in India, as well as the cementing ties between the two armies and arrangements for providing necessary assistance to modernization. General Singh also met Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services General Min Aung Hlaing and discussed cooperation between the two armed forces in border region stability, development, disaster risk management, other emergency issues, and border region healthcare. The General also met with Deputy Commander-in-Chief Lieutenant General Soe Win and Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin during his visit.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Laiza talks helps support nation-wide ceasefire, framework for political dialogue and peace building through political dialogues – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-31-red.pdf> (NLM) 31 October 2013 (p. 1)

<sup>3</sup> Peace process not ends with ceasefire. Discussions, debates on Constitution indicate democratic practices taking shape in Myanmar society. Avoid taking extreme measures when dealing with constitutional amendment – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-01-red.pdf> (NLM) 1 November 2013 (p. 1 & 9)

<sup>4</sup> Myanmar, India hold talks on military modernization, border security – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-31-red.pdf> (NLM) 31 October 2013 (p. 1) / Myanmar, India would not accept any acts that can harm stability and security of the two countries: Senior General Min Aung Hlaing – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-31-red.pdf> (NLM) 31 October 2013 (p. 16 & 9) / Deputy C-in-C welcomes Indian Army Chief – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-31-red.pdf> (NLM) 31 October 2013 (p. 9) / Union FM receives US guests, Indian Chief of the Army Staff – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-31-red.pdf> (NLM) 31 October 2013 (p. 8)

## HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

### Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 8<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 15<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 28 October. During the session:

- U Thein Lwin of Chauk Constituency raised a question on **revising the existing laws on traffic rules and issuance of driving licences**. Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint said that **arrangements are being made to improve Motor Vehicle Law 1964 and Motor Vehicle Bylaw 1989 for enforcing the traffic rules to be in line with the present day**.
- Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee submitted amendments from the Amyotha Hluttaw and the approval of the Pyithu Hluttaw of the **Myanmar Special Economic Zone Bill**. **The Pyithu Hluttaw approved the submission and decided to discuss the different points of the bill at upcoming the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session.**<sup>5</sup>

The 8<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 16<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 29 October. During the session:

- U Tin Maung Oo of Shwepyitha Constituency raised a **question on developments regarding the Wadaya and Thadukan industrial zones in Rangoon Region**. Deputy Minister for Industry U Thein Aung replied that **the Yangon Region government is striving to fulfil the requirements of Wadaya and Thadukan industrial zones that were established in 2004 and that had lagged behind in development due to an inadequate electricity supply and farmland issues. Upon completion of developing the two zones as well as section 4 of the Shwepyitha Industrial Zone where 3 other sections have developed, there will be new jobs for 25,000 workers.**<sup>6</sup>

## HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

### Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 8<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 15<sup>th</sup> day meeting on 28 October. During the session:

- Three MPs held discussions on a motion to urge the Union Government **to review workers' rights and to formulate a labour law** submitted by Dr Myint Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency No (8). Deputy Minister Daw Win Maw Tun said **the existing labour laws which were drawn up in accord with ILO's conventions allow all employees, old and young and men and women alike, to enjoy effective benefits and rights of employee protection. There are plans to publish a book about labour laws, she added, and said that the ministry is taking necessary measures to enact new laws and to rewrite and amend old laws. In addition, she said that emphasis is being placed on ensuring the rights and benefits of workers who are playing a role in enhancing production capacity of the country. The motion was put on record;**
- Dr Myat Nyana Soe, secretary of Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee, submitted a **Bill to amend the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law** and the session approved a discussion of the Bill. MP Myint Tun of Bago Region Constituency No (10) read out a report of Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee on the **Bill to amend the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law.**<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Revising Motor Vehicle Bill, Myanmar Special Economic Zone Bill discussed – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-29-red.pdf> (NLM) 29 October 2013 (p. 16)

<sup>6</sup> Roadside vendors allowed to sell their goods at designated places for part time – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-30-red.pdf> (NLM) 30 October 2013 (p.16 & 9)

<sup>7</sup> Amyotha Hluttaw to discuss bill amending Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-29-red.pdf> (NLM) 29 October 2013 (p. 16)

## UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

### **ETHNIC ARMED GROUPS SIGN NATION-WIDE CEASEFIRE PLEDGE IN LAIZA**

The leaders of 17 of the 18 armed ethnic armed groups met in Laiza, the headquarters of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), from 30 October to 2 November and signed an agreement endorsing a proposed nationwide ceasefire agreement. The Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) (also known as the Shan State Army South), which supported the agreement but opted not to sign, stated that the group needed time consult Shan political parties and community-based organizations. The conference was held at the request of the KIO leadership who were seeking a united response to the government's proposed nationwide ceasefire. According to attendees, the agreement includes the KIO's long held stipulation that the central agreement hold a comprehensive political dialogue with the armed rebel groups as part of the nationwide ceasefire agreement.<sup>8</sup>

*For EBO analysis of the meeting, please see EBO Briefing Paper No. 5/2013 - [Ethnic Armed Organizations Conference](#)<sup>9</sup>.*

### **KACHIN ETHNIC PARTY TO MAKE ALLIANCE WITH OPPOSITION NLD**

The Kachin State National Congress for Democracy (KNCD) has plans to form an alliance with the National League for Democracy (NLD). The "KNCD will ally with NLD as the same way we did in 1990. We haven't completed the legal formalities for the alliance. But we usually meet with NLD members in Myitkyina Township. As we have the same aims with NLD, negotiation can be easy," said KNCD secretary Sisi Nawger.

The KNCD was founded in 1949, is based in Myitkyina, Kachin State and won the largest and second largest votes in their region in the 1952, 1956 and 1990 elections. The party, along with all other members of United Nationalities Alliance, a coalition of ethnic political parties, did not participate in 2010 Election. The registration of the party was approved on 22 October.<sup>10</sup>

### **MULTI-ETHNIC POLITICAL PARTY WANTS CONSTITUTION CHANGED**

The Nationalities Brotherhood Federation (NBF) party is in the process of rewriting sections of the 2008 Constitution, according to NBF member and All Mon Regions Democracy Party (AMDP) Chairman Nai Ngwe Thein. "We, Nationalities Brotherhood Federation, will amend any points that are not working in federal union and have also have decided to fix any points that are in opposition to democracy," said Nai Ngwe Thein. AMDP general secretary Dr. Min Nwe Soe said the NBF is looking into what changes need to be made to the Constitution and that once this is determined, the recommendations will be submitted to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Assembly). The NBF released a five-point statement on 13 October calling "for all stakeholders in the country to work towards the establishment of a federal union by making the necessary amendments to the 2008 Constitution". The Mon Democracy Party (MDP) is also reviewing points that may require amendments, but will independently submit their suggestions to Parliament. Similarly, the National League for Democracy (NLD) is also conducting opinion polls across the country on parts of the Constitution which should be amended or be completely rewritten.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Burma's armed ethnic groups sign nation-wide ceasefire pledge in Laiza –

<http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2592-burma-s-armed-ethnic-groups-sign-nation-wide-ceasefire-pledge-in-laiza.html>

(KNG) 4 November 2013

<sup>9</sup> [http://euro-burma.eu/doc/EBO\\_Brief\\_No\\_5\\_2013\\_EAOC.pdf](http://euro-burma.eu/doc/EBO_Brief_No_5_2013_EAOC.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Kachin ethnic party to make alliance with opposition NLD –

<http://elevenmyanmar.com/politics/3866-kachin-ethnic-party-to-make-alliance-with-opposition-nld> (Eleven News Media) 27 October 2013

<sup>11</sup> Multi-ethnic political party wants Constitution changed –

<http://monnews.org/2013/10/30/multi-ethnic-political-party-wants-constitution-changed/> (IMNA) 30 October 2013

## EU OFFERS TO SEND MONITORS TO BURMA'S 2015 ELECTION

The European Union has offered to send a delegation of observers to Burma's eagerly awaited 2015 general election. At a press conference in Yangon on 30 October, EU Ambassador Roland Kobia said he was hopeful about the coming general election, at which democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi has said she plans to contest the presidency. "We are assured by the feedback that we receive—by what we hear from the government, also by the [Burmese] Union Election Commission—that there is a commitment, that the elections will be open, free, transparent, fair," he said. "We welcome all that, and we are ready to support all stakeholders in order to make this happen." He said an informal offer to monitor the polls, which he believes is the first from the international community, has already been made. "We have made an offer to the country that if they were interested in having an election monitoring mission—which gives, you know, a cloud of credibility to elections—we will be very happy to contribute," he said. "I'm sure other countries will be interested in doing so. I don't think there will be a lack of interest from the international community in this regard." Although he declined to go into details about changes to the Constitution, Kobia added "It's a good thing that the Constitution is being looked at to see if it can be improved to match with the new history of Myanmar [Burma] since 2011."<sup>12</sup>

## KACHIN LEADER GIVEN APPROVAL TO FORM POLITICAL PARTY

The long-running efforts of a senior Kachin leader to register a party representing the ethnic group have finally paid off, with Burma's Election Commission approving Dr. Manam Tu Ja's registration of the Kachin State Democracy Party (KSDP) four years after he first set out to join the national political arena.

Burma's state-run newspaper The Mirror reported the party's official registration on 31 October: "The Union Election Commission found the proposed party, of 17 Kachin leaders led by U Manam Tu Ja, is in compliance with the rule of law and has been granted the registration to set up a political party."

Tu Ja, a former vice president of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) who will serve as the new party's chairman, happily confirmed the development, "It's a different time and a different government. ... We did not get it last time because it was a time of political transition, and it was still the military government. We found that the present government is moving forward, toward democracy. This is why we got the party registered this time."

The Union Election Commission rejected Tu Ja's attempt to register the KSDP in 2010 - a decision that was widely believed to have been directly related to a deteriorating relationship between the KIO and the central government over the former's refusal to transform into a Border Guard Force. Tu Ja then tried to register as an independent candidate but was blocked again. "It damaged a lot of the Kachin people's political interests when we were not able to register the party at that time," he said. "As a consequence, today there are no [Kachin] representatives in Parliament."

The ability of the newly minted KSDP to contest in Burma's next national elections, slated for 2015, offers the ethnic Kachin people an opportunity to vote for candidates that represent their interests, according to Tu Ja, who added that the Kachin minority were denied this chance in the November 2010 elections. "We did not have Kachin representatives in the Kachin State parliament, nor the national Parliament, because we could not have our own party."<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> EU Offers to Send Monitors to Burma's 2015 Election –

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/eu-offers-send-monitors-burmas-2015-election.html> (Irrawaddy) 30 October 2013

<sup>13</sup> Kachin Leader Gets Long-Sought Approval for Political Party –

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/kachin-leader-gets-long-sought-approval-political-party.html> (Irrawaddy) 31 October 2013

## **ANALYSIS**

The recent talks between the government and representatives from 17 ethnic armed groups aimed at ending decades of fighting ended without agreement on signing a nationwide ceasefire. However, the fact that such a meeting could take place reflects the will of the government and ethnic groups to achieve peace. While the meetings in Laiza and Myitkyina will serve as major steps in achieving national reconciliation, it remains unclear on how and when the nationwide ceasefire will take place. In spite of these achievements, there is still some distrust on the part of the armed ethnic groups toward the peace process. Decades of fighting has seen local populations in ethnic areas displaced including the loss of homes and livelihoods as well as cases of human rights abuses. Under such circumstances, trust between all stakeholders will be crucial if a nationwide ceasefire is to become a reality.

Burma's political transition is now entering an important stage and for it to be genuine and enduring it is critical that all stakeholders, including members of all ethnic armed groups, political parties, civil society organizations, lawmakers, and military and government leaders, be part of the political dialogue process. More importantly, the ethnic groups must be given the right to manage their future and work together with the government to bring peace to the country.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: JOINT PRESS RELEASE OF UPWC & EAGS AFTER MYITKYINA MEETING

Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
Press Release Team

Press Release No. 17/2013

3rd Waxing of Tazaungmon, 1375 ME

5 November 2013

#### **Press release on peace talks between Union Peace-making Work Committee and ethnic armed organizations for nation-wide ceasefire**

1. The peace talks for signing the nationwide ceasefire deal between Union Peace-making Work Committee and ethnic armed organizations were held in Majwel Hall in Myitkyina in Kachin State on November 4-5, 2013. It was attended by Vice-Chairman of Union Peace-making Work Committee Union Minister U Aung Min and party and leaders and reps of ethnic armed organizations. UNSG's Special Representative to Myanmar Mr Vijay Nambiar and Asian Special Representative of the People's Republic of China Wang Ying Fan also attended the meeting as observers.
2. The nationwide ceasefire common principles of ethnic armed groups (Laiza Agreement) drafted by Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) formed with leaders of ethnic armed organizations were discussed and transferred to the Union Peace-making Work Committee.
3. Similarly, the nationwide ceasefire accord between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and ethnic armed groups drafted by the Union Peace-making Work Committee was transferred to the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team.
4. The meeting agreed on the following facts so as to reach the political agreement:-
  - (a) Reaching nationwide ceasefire deal
  - (b) Designing policy framework for political dialogue
  - (c) Holding political dialogues
5. The NCCT will coordinate with ethnic armed groups for nationwide ceasefire deal and agreed to hold discussions with Union Peace-making Work Committee in Hpa-an in Kayin State in December, 2013.
6. This joint press release is to communicate the public that the delegates from both sides were encouraged by the fruitful cooperation in the meeting that could bring an end to the more-than-60-years-long armed conflicts and agreed to hold political dialogue as soon as possible.

**Press Release Team<sup>14</sup>**

---

<sup>14</sup> Press release on peace talks between Union Peace-making Work Committee and ethnic armed organizations for nation-wide ceasefire –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-06-red.pdf> (NLM) 6 November 2013 (p. 1)



**APPENDIX B: PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO ETHNIC ARMED GROUPS' MEETING IN LAIZA**

**Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
President Office**

**President's message sent to ethnic armed groups meeting in Laiza**

**29 October 2013**

First of all, I would like to extend my warmest greetings to the national brethren who are attending the Liza meeting.

With the aim of building eternal peace in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the ethnic armed groups are gathering in Liza of Kachin State.

I strongly believed that resolutions, agreements and future tasks that come out from the meeting would help support signing a nation-wide ceasefire agreement, setting a framework for political dialogue and building peace through political dialogues for restoration of peace in the Union.

I believed that the unity among all national races could bring about greater success in realizing non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty. And I wish the meeting may produce a fruitful result.

**Sd/ Thein Sein  
President<sup>15</sup>**

**APPENDIX C: TEXT OF PRESIDENT'S RADIO SPEECH ON 1 NOVEMBER**

**Peace process not end with ceasefire**

**Discussions, debates on Constitution indicate democratic practices taking shape in Myanmar society**

**Avoid taking extreme measures when dealing with constitutional amendment**

*The following is the full text of the speech delivered by President U Thein Sein through radio programmes to the entire people on 1 November.*

My fellow citizens:

I would like to inform all of you about the recent changes and developments that have taken place in our country as well as the progress made in the peace process in this month's radio program.

First of all, I would like to wholeheartedly welcome the peace conference of the leaders of the ethnic armed groups that is being held since the end of last month. I understand that this conference is being held with a view to discussing the issues related to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement that is planned to take place in the near future. I am very happy to hear that the deliberation at the conference was very constructive and that its emphasis was on achieving lasting peace which all citizens have longed for. I would like to reiterate that I will be welcoming all ethnic armed groups to the signing ceremony of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement after they successfully conclude the peace conference.

I would like to briefly explain the objectives of holding the signing ceremony of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. We are holding the ceremony because we want to comply with the demands of the ethnic armed groups, reaffirm all existing agreements and undertake the tasks needed to inaugurate the peace dialogue process immediately after the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. I would like to reaffirm once more that the peace process will not end with ceasefire; we

---

<sup>15</sup> Laiza talks helps support nation-wide ceasefire, framework for political dialogue and peace building through political dialogues – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-31-red.pdf> (NLM) 31 October 2013 (p. 1)



are committed to launching the political dialogue process from the foundation of ceasefires we have already achieved. I would also like to make clear again that in the current peace process the government discussed all the proposed items from the ethnic armed groups without setting any preconditions. Such actions helped us to successfully build trust with the ethnic armed groups. The mutual trust we have built so far also allowed the government and the ethnic armed groups to work together in solving unfortunate problems such as the recent incidences of explosions. I am convinced that the Laiza peace conference of the leaders of ethnic armed groups will pave the way for the successful inauguration of the political dialogue process.

The way in which a person may view the pace of the political process and the reforms depends on his or her political views, perspectives and norms. The analysis of the recent political discussions and debates on the Constitution indicates that democratic practices have begun to take shape in our society. It is our national duty for all of us to try to do everything we can to make sure that these democratic practices are consolidated and become deeply rooted in our society. In so doing, we should avoid the two extremes— slow actions that could significantly slow down the democratization process and fast actions that could lead to gaps in the process. Our society must try to achieve pragmatic results that are more reflective of our current political situation. We should also avoid taking extreme measures when dealing with constitutional amendment. Instead of simply focusing on what we want, we should act objectively with the right intentions to fulfil the wishes of people and try to achieve the possibilities available to us in our current political climate.

The Political Prisoners Review Committee recently released 56 political prisoners with intention to further strengthen our efforts to achieve national unity. We will continue to do everything we can to make sure that no political prisoners remain in prisons. I also visited Rakhine State during October. I personally witnessed the riots in Thandwe during that trip. Such episodes show that there are still many challenges hampering our efforts to build an open society. The members of the society as a whole will need to work hand in hand with each other in order to resolve these challenges. I have instructed the local authorities to continue to endeavor in their efforts to enhance the bedrock of conflict resolution, namely prevalence of law and order and regional stability. I have also urged the social, religious and community leaders to work with each other in finding solutions through dialogue.

I would also like to inform all of you that Myanmar has taken up the ASEAN Chairmanship on October 10 at the summit held in Brunei. This is the first time we have assumed the ASEAN Chairmanship in the past 17 years. The fact that we are able to assume the ASEAN Chairmanship indicates that both ASEAN and the international community have faith in the government, the people and the future of our country.

By assuming the ASEAN Chairmanship, we are taking an important duty and responsibility in the international community. At the same time, we are entrusted with this duty mainly because the progress in the political reform process has reached a respectable level. We will therefore be performing this duty on behalf of the entire nation.

The duty of the ASEAN Chairmanship involves more than leading the association; we will have to take the lead in ASEAN's cooperation with such world powers as the United States, Peoples' Republic of China, India, Japan, the European Union and Russia. The year of our ASEAN Chairmanship is an important year because we will have to undertake all the preparations needed for the inauguration of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. While serving as the Chairman of ASEAN, we will be hosting the ASEAN Summit and other important meetings at Nay Pyi Taw where we will have to take the lead in discussing important international issues.

In the upcoming year, we will be doing everything necessary to make ASEAN become a powerful regional organization and to improve the relations between ASEAN and the rest of the international community. This is also an indication that Myanmar has adopted a new approach to the

international community and international relations. Our current foreign policy priorities do not only concern protecting Myanmar's national interests; we are also trying to become a responsible member of the family of nations.

To sum up my speech for this month, our society is going through an important period of political reform processes. These processes are full of challenges and we will have to try to resolve them every step of the way. On the one hand we will have to resolve various types of problems and on the other hand we can already see concrete rays of hope for the future. I would therefore like to urge all of you to work together to make sure on the basis of such hopes and determinations that the political and other reform processes are viable. In conclusion, I would like to say that I have dedicated all of my efforts to achieve peace, improve the social and economic welfare of the people and create a better and brighter future for the younger generation.

May you all have peace of mind and good health.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Peace processes not end with ceasefire. Discussions, debates on Constitution indicate democratic practices taking shape in Myanmar society. Avoid taking extreme measures when dealing with constitutional amendment – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-11-01-red.pdf> (NLM) 1 November 2013 (p. 1 & 9)