

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Thein Sein of Burma in Rangoon, Burma

November 19, 2012

President Thein Sein. First of all, the entire people of Myanmar, including myself, join me in welcoming Your Excellency, Mr. President—the first-ever visit of a U.S. President to Myanmar. And it is in Myanmar—[*inaudible*—our bilateral relationship.

In fact, Myanmar established diplomatic relations with the United States since—in the year 1947, a year before our—the year before our independence. The United States was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Myanmar, and our countries have long history and have maintained friendly relations.

For the first 20 years, there were some difficulties and obstacles in our bilateral relations. But however, when President Obama took office in the United States, and because of the visions—a reengagement policy of the President, as well as the efforts of the Secretary of State and the contributions of the Ambassador—our bilateral relations have been progressing steadily. And then, in this regard, I would like to reiterate our commitment to continue cooperation to strengthen our bilateral relations in the years to come.

In this regard, we would like to say here—we would like to reiterate that based on mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation, we will move forward to further strengthen and promote our bilateral relations with the United States.

During our discussion, we also reached agreements that—for development of democracy in Myanmar and for promoting of human rights to be in—of international standard. We will continue to cooperate with the United States to—for the capacity buildings of our officials and for development of social [*inaudible*—in the area of social [*inaudible*—such as education and health—public health care services for the people of Myanmar.

In this regard, I would like to—we will redouble our efforts that the discussion—the discussions that we had will bring benefit for the people of Myanmar and bring prosperity to our country. And in this regard, we will continue to work with—as partner with the United States.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to President Obama's visions and the support for, as well as the efforts of—excellent efforts of Secretary Clinton, as well as the responsible officials from the State Department which have paved the way for promotion of our bilateral relations and cooperation between our two countries.

I want to use the exact word used by the President Obama. We will continue to move forward. We will move forward. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Well, I just want to thank the President for hosting us here today and the incredible hospitality that everybody here has shown us so far. And I'll be very brief because I know that I'll be giving a speech later and have an opportunity to share my vision further with the people here.

But I just want to share that we had a very constructive conversation. I shared with President Thein Sein our belief that the process of reform that he is taking is one that will

move this country forward. The steps that he's already taken for democratization, elections, the release of prisoners of conscience, a commitment to work with us on a human rights dialogue all can unleash the incredible potential of this beautiful country.

And I shared with him the fact that I recognize that this is just the first steps on what will be a long journey. But we think that a process of democratic reform and economic reform here in Myanmar that has been begun by the President is one that can lead to incredible development opportunities here. And we are committed to continuing to work very hard to try to strengthen the bilateral relationship so that we can promote progress that will be good not only for this country, but for the region and for the international community.

And the last point I would just make is, we appreciate this concrete cooperation that the President has announced with respect to nonproliferation issues, including the IAEA additional protocol, because I think we share an interest in trying to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. And that is obviously a significant security concern for the United States, but also for the world. And so we very much appreciate that step forward.

So, Mr. President, thank you for your hospitality. I look forward to not only a good visit today, but hopefully, another visit sometime in the future.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:12 a.m. at the Parliament Building. In his remarks, President Thein Sein referred to U.S. Ambassador to Burma Derek J Mitchell. President Thein Sein spoke in Burmese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Burma :: President Thein Sein.

Locations: Rangoon, Burma.

Names: Thein Sein.

Subjects: Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Nonproliferation efforts; Atomic Energy Agency, International (IAEA); Burma : Democracy efforts; Burma : Economic growth and development; Burma : Human rights issues; Burma : President; Burma : President Obama's visit; Burma : Relations with U.S.

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