

**REMARKS BY HON'BLE MINISTER
OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
AT THE ICWA LECTURE BY
FOREIGN MINISTER OF MYANMAR
ON 'MYANMAR: A COUNTRY IN
TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY'**

H.E. Mr. U Wunna Maung Lwin,
Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Myanmar

Excellency Mr. UZin Yaw, Ambassador
of Myanmar to India

Senior officials of Myanmar and India

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure to
be with you today at this session
of the Indian Council for World
Affairs where His Excellency Mr.
Wunna Maung Lwin, Foreign

Minister of Myanmar will address us on a most topical issue, not only in India but the world over, relating to Myanmar's transition to democracy.

Myanmar has undergone remarkable changes since general elections were held in November 2010 and a new civilian Government assumed office in March 2011. The Government led by President U Thein Sein has set a remarkable pace in initiating political reform and undertaking

structured negotiations both with the opposition democratic groups and the ethnic ceasefire groups. The Government has shown welcome openness in its dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy and in undertaking reform and offering amnesty to political prisoners. These steps have facilitated broader and all-inclusive participation in Myanmar politics. Likewise, the flexibility with which negotiations have been undertaken with the

ethnic groups has enabled preliminary peace agreements with some of the most intransigent groups. Along with these steps, the Government has also intensified its engagement with the outside world by stepping up the level and frequency of its global interactions. Our congratulations are also due to the Government of Myanmar for Myanmar's assumption of the Chair of ASEAN in 2014.

With the clearing of the political arena, the stage is now set for developmental activity in the remote areas of the country where the ethnic groups are in majority. We in India are hopeful that this will also accelerate the process of development in the areas bordering India, thus benefiting people of both countries. We are doing our part in this exercise through the implementation of projects promoting connectivity and development particularly in the

Rakhine and Chin States and the Sagaing Division of Myanmar. The Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, once complete, will undoubtedly transform trade and commerce in the Rakhine and Chin States as well as the North Eastern States of India. It will also boost investment and tourism in these States. Similarly, the Rhi-Tiddim project and other small road projects we hope to undertake in the States of Myanmar bordering India should boost the economy of these States

through greater connectivity and development.

The new Myanmar leadership has also emphasized the urgent need for economic and monetary policy reform in order to usher in a facilitatory environment for trade, commerce and investment. Indian industry has been studying prospects in Myanmar – we had a resounding response to the Enterprise India Show held in Yangon in November 2011 and many Indian companies have

carried out follow-up visits to ascertain investment and business opportunities in a range of sectors. We are also looking at ways of boosting land, air and sea connectivity between our countries. Once these economic and monetary policy reforms are put in place, I have no doubt that Indian companies will invest in a substantial manner to lasting and mutual benefit. We will also be focusing our energies on the mutually agreed target of doubling

of bilateral trade to USD 3 billion by 2015.

In sum, the recent positive developments in Myanmar have infused fresh momentum into the already cordial and friendly ties between India and Myanmar. I have no doubt that as Myanmar continues on the new path charted out by its leaders, the political, economic and commercial relations between our

two countries will only deepen further.

I now look forward to hearing from the Hon'ble Foreign Minister his views on the developments that have already taken place in Myanmar and his vision for its future.

Thank you.

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