

**State Counsellor: Main essence of conference is ability to continue political discussion process through mutual understanding**

Following is an unofficial translation of a speech delivered by National Reconciliation and Peace Centre Chairperson State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the closing ceremony of the Third Session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong.

Dear conference chairman, members of the chair, UPDJC (Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee) members and conference delegates,

By signing part two of the Union Accord, the Third Session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong held for six days has reached another milestone successfully. In part two, there were only fourteen basic principles but it is a happy and praiseworthy outcome for us, as it was obtained through thorough discussions at UPDJC meetings and the conference based on papers submitted from national level political dialogues and groups. It is believed that all realize their own situation after reaching a common agreement through discussion with mutual respect and understanding during the six-day period of the conference.

Recognizing the result of the Third Session of the conference Chairman and conference delegates, In our Third Session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong, agreements were reached on a total of fourteen points. Four were in political sector, one in economic sector, seven in social sector and two in land sector. We were unable to reach an agreement in the security sector this time.

Two things can be made out of this. One is the fact that although the Constitution contains the desires of the ethnic nationals, they want to include words that are more exact. Another is including matters not included in the Constitution in the Union Accord. The agreed points are part of the Union Accord. These are new steps taken toward signing a complete Union Accord the next time.

Some think the agreements reached were few in numbers. Looking back, all know that more than a year had passed between the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong Second and Third sessions. Much negotiations and discussions were conducted to hold the Third Session. It is a sign that our peace process is progressing with such good results despite facing many difficulties and disagreements. Agreements may be few in numbers. But the main essence of this conference is the ability to continuing the political discussion process through mutual understanding and effort. Today's signing of Part II agreements is an indication that our conference had not stopped or turned back, but progressing forward with difficulties.

At the same time, ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) that didn't sign the NCA (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement) but attended the conference at our invitation were able to see first-hand discussions and negotiations made at the conference. Their representatives also met separately with the Government and the Tatmadaw. In these meetings, we were able to discuss openly and cordially, and many good possibilities of participating in the peace process were obtained. This also is one of the positive results of the Third Session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong.

Together with this, we were able to discuss and issue a Declaration of the Conference, so that hopes of the ethnic nationals and people who are waiting and watching the 21st Century Panglong Conference were not dimmed. The main points of this declaration are to hold a total of three conferences, one in 2018 and two more in 2019; setting up basic principles related to democracy and federalism as a basic foundation; and each group is to strive towards setting up these basic principles in the conferences that will be held. These main points, these aims are set as the resolve of the conference. The declaration is an official announcement made to the ethnic nationals and people by the conference of the future work. Whatever may happen and whatever the difficulties may be, we were showing that, we, as a single body and mind, will not give up and took firm steps to walk on. We are very much pleased and happy to make this declaration, a political resolve that is full of essence politically, as the outlook of the conference.

Difficulties and the way forward Chairman and conference delegates, In the discussions and negotiations for peace conducted in this conference, there were points in which everyone was in agreement and there were points where it was difficult for everyone to agree on. Groups participating in the discussions had different backgrounds as well as difference in envisioning the future. As negotiations and discussions were held under such differences, much time and patience is required to achieve good results and there's bound to be many challenges.

When the security sector was negotiated, all were seen to be very cautious. For the peace process, it is very important to have good results in the security sector. A complete Union Accord needs to have agreements in security sector. To resolve this difficulty, the construction and design of our political discussion framework is to be reviewed courageously and we must strive toward making a better work process.

To conduct required reforms for a smooth future, to accomplish the conference declaration, weaknesses need to be amended and strengths reinforced. We need much closer cooperation among our groups. To overcome the difficulties, it is important for the main forces to have a common aim for the future. The common aim for the future has been issued today as the conference declaration. To implement the common aim for the future would require the formulation of a peace strategy. Based on this strategy, it is required to change the political framework to a better and more appropriate one. As UPDJC has already formed necessary groups, this is to be urged to be conducted as soon as possible.

The main reason for armed conflicts in our country is mistrust and suspicion among one another and from this difference, hostility and hatred came about. To build trust, leaders of the (different) forces need to meet and exchange views. Common views are to be achieved from among the different views. In meeting with leaders of EAOs that had signed the NCA, we agreed for the leaders or representatives delegated by the leaders to meet frequently. All are informed that the Government is giving priority toward conducting such meetings with the leaders.

Similarly, while conducting political discussions, when the requirements and demands are not met, hard feelings and stumbling blocks can form. These must not go beyond the peace table and contaminate the relevant public and societies. When these contaminate the public, it could generate more dissatisfaction and as dissatisfaction increases, it will turn into loathing and hatred. Unique

and positive transformations that people at the grassroots level could see and feel need to occur in peace. The voices of the people from relevant regions need to be listened to by our 21st Century Panglong Conference. Each group needs to strive toward reconciliation trickling down to the grassroots level. Our government will strive towards developing the social life of ethnic nationals and people in the conflict areas and all are urged to cooperate in this.

We are not approaching peace through our government formulating the peace process or playing the lead role. We are approaching it by supporting and mediating the creation of good results among the forces. Our belief is constructing peace through trust and understanding. The approach of our government is strengthening trust and finding solution through understanding.

## Conclusion

Chairman and conference delegates,

In conclusion, we are glad to hear that the conference delegates were able to discuss in detail this time. All had coordinated for those participating in the political discussion to have deeper understanding, discussed in detail to have the same future aim, established a setting where thoughts can be exchanged, and there was sufficient time. During the time between conferences, reviews and preparations were made, resulting in a better conference setup, but we need to continue our endeavor to achieve a better situation.

When we strive towards taking steps forward, it is very important to make sure that the steps taken are firm. What we are doing now is laying the foundation stones for a democratic federal union that will come into being in the future. Only when the foundation is strong, can the upper structure be solid and durable. Whether there are more or less agreement is not important. It is more important that we have good understanding among one another and have common acceptance. These are more important for a robust future. It is believed that all will strive toward setting up more complete and better basic principles in the next conference.

Heartfelt thanks to UPDJC secretaries and committee members, conference delegates, facilitators and support groups that worked tirelessly during the six-day conference. May all continue to work in good health and good spirits for successful conferences in the future. Thank you.





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