



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Delegation for relations with the countries of Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

1ST EP-MYANMAR INTERPARLIAMANETARY MEETING

26 FEBRUARY - 2 MARCH 2012

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN

Mr Werner LANGEN

Summary of visit

Members of the European Parliament delegation for relations with Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) travelled to Myanmar from 26 February to 2 March 2012. The Delegation of eleven members was chaired by Werner LANGEN (EPP, Germany). It included Ms Barbara LOCHBIHLER (Greens/EFA, Germany) the Chair of the Sub Committee on Human Rights. A full list of participants is attached. This was the first official visit by the ASEAN delegation to Myanmar.

The members of the delegation were grateful to the Myanmar authorities and the EU Delegation for Myanmar, currently based in Bangkok, for their invaluable assistance in the preparation and organisation of the visit.

The very full programme (appended) incorporated meetings at the highest levels of the Myanmar Government, including the President H.E. U Thein Sein. The delegation also met the leader of the National League for Democracy and Sakharov Prize laureate, Ms Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as representatives of other political parties. The atmosphere in the meetings was constructive and positive and the government speakers constantly underlined their wish to work with the EU and to receive assistance in capacity building.

The visit came at what has been described by many observers as an era of unprecedented *glasnost* in Myanmar. After 50 years of isolation, the government has embarked in recent months on an ambitious programme of fundamental political and economic reform. In the words of one speaker: "Myanmar was closed for many years but it has now opened the door". Members of the government stressed on many occasions during the visit that this process was "sustainable and irreversible". The reform programme was ambitious in its scope, encompassing "multiple and simultaneous transitions".

There was general recognition from non-government interlocutors that significant political progress had indeed been made and that Myanmar had become a much more open country. However, there were questions about how "sustainable and irreversible" the changes actually were and whether the government had the capacity to fully implement the reforms.

It was nonetheless evident that the reform process was a "work in progress" and that much remained to be done. As one minister noted, the government was "climbing the mountain but had not yet reached the summit". Although the President and other leading members of the government appeared to be strongly committed to the reforms, there were fears that other elements in the power structure were more sceptical or downright hostile to the process and could prove to be obstructive. In addition, there were concerns about the administrative competence of a government machine, in which civil servants were afraid to take initiatives and communication between ministries and departments was often poor.

There were mixed opinions about the National Commission on Human Rights, which had been established by the government in September 2011 with the aim of promoting and safeguarding the fundamental rights of citizens. While welcoming it in principle, opposition speakers criticised it for being reactive and lacking in sufficient experience to operate effectively in the new environment.

The release of hundreds of political prisoners was welcomed by opposition and civil society; however the issue of whether all political prisoners had been released was still under debate and was complicated by differences between government and non-government speakers over how to define a "political prisoner" - according to the government the only remaining political prisoners were those who had committed criminal acts.

There was also considerable discussion during the meetings on the extent to which those guilty of human rights abuses should be held accountable and how to ensure that the process of reconciliation was not marred by a desire for retribution.

The by-elections to be held on 1 April would provide a major test of the extent and depth of the political reforms. Although these will only take place in a limited number of constituencies - 45 (originally 48) seats out of more than 500 in the two Chambers of Parliament - the symbolic importance is immense. Competing parties will include Ms Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) which boycotted the 2010 general election. The majority of non-government interlocutors accepted that these elections promised to be generally in line with internationally accepted standards and a significant improvement on the heavily criticised elections of 2010; although there remained complaints about such issues as access to voter lists and advance voting. Most observers also conclude that Myanmar's rulers genuinely want the NLD to enter parliament to give it more legitimacy. The issue of international observers at the elections was discussed on a number of occasions and - after the return to Europe of the delegation - there was an invitation to the EU (including the EP) to send observers, which was accepted.

The increased media freedoms provided strong evidence of the political reform process. Opposition candidates such as Aung San Suu Kyi had been given access to broadcast media and there were signs of a more open and unfettered press. A sign of the more open climate was the T-shirts and DVDs of Aung San Suu Kyi that were widely available. The delegation was also informed that laws were being prepared to enshrine media freedoms more firmly in the statute book, although this legislation will need to be examined in detail. NGOs were

becoming more active and playing a role in a more participatory civil society.

Several non-government speakers noted that the flawed 2008 constitution was still in force, reserving powers for the army - most visibly the setting aside of 25% of the seats in the Parliament for the military. Ministers argued that there was scope for the constitution to be amended in the future. Some - including several non-government speakers - also contended that the presence of the military in the legislature would enable "the generals" to become more familiar with parliamentary practices and that the current assembly provided a step towards a genuine parliament. Indeed there was evidence that the parliament - despite its limited powers - was becoming more vocal and assertive. It appeared to be inevitable that the military would continue to play a key role for some time in national politics and Aung San Suu Kyi declared that she was willing to work with it.

The conflicts in a number of parts of Myanmar were a major element in the discussions. Armed insurgencies by secessionist groups had been used by the military as a justification for seizing power in 1962, and installing a military dictatorship based on a "unitary" state. The intervening years had been marked by violent struggles in many parts of the country; however this violence had abated and cease-fires had been signed between the government and many armed ethnic groups. The ongoing insurgency in Kachin State was the most significant exception to this more positive picture and remained a cause of deep concern. Isolated clashes were still taking place with other armed groups and restricted media access in many remote areas made the situation unclear. A number of non-government speakers expressed concern that there was still considerable potential for conflict; however the overall picture during the visit was one of a people desiring peace after warfare that had lasted far too long.

The government representatives stressed that their priorities were to agree cease-fires; to engage in dialogue with the armed groups and the civilian population; and to provide employment and ensure the reconstruction of the areas affected by conflict. They largely rejected charges of human rights abuses, conceding only that there might have been cases involving individual soldiers.

The issue of the Rohingya in North Rakhine State was raised on a number of occasions by the EP Delegation. Non-government speakers contended that this Muslim people - many of whom had fled to Bangladesh - still faced discrimination and heavy restrictions, especially over rights to Myanmar citizenship. The nationality requirements impacted most negatively on those who had married citizens of Bangladesh and their children, who were regarded as "Bengalis".

Economic reform was taking place at the same time as the political reform process and many speakers stressed that this economic development would help promote political stability. There was huge economic potential, indeed Myanmar had in the past been one of the most prosperous countries in Asia and it was blessed with a huge number of natural resources. Government speakers laid much of the blame for Myanmar's dire economic situation on the international sanctions, rather than on their own economic mismanagement and the endemic corruption (often referred to as "cronyism"). Some non-government speakers also contended that the sanctions (and the exclusion of Myanmar from the EU's Generalised System of Preferences) had only served to hit the poorest sectors of the population, such as the garment industry workers.

There was considerable discussion about whether the EU sanctions had been a positive factor in encouraging the government to embark upon the process of reform. Government representatives broadly argued that they had not been influenced by the sanctions but had reached an independent decision that the time was right to turn over a new leaf and transform Myanmar's political and economic systems. On the other hand Aung San Suu Kyi considered that the sanctions had played an important role in persuading the government to launch the current reform process.

The EU sanctions were softened in February and most of the other "restrictive measures" - which are due to expire on 30 April 2012 - are up for review on 23 April 2012. A visit by Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was scheduled to take place shortly after. The question remained however about the extent to which the sanctions should be eased.

It was nonetheless apparent that the sanctions had caused Myanmar to become over-reliant on trade with China - indeed one speaker stated that "Myanmar had become part of China because of the sanctions". The dangers of this policy - particularly entering into contracts with China which enabled it to gain control of many of Myanmar's natural resources - had been increasingly recognised by members of the government. A sign of this changed attitude was the postponement of the controversial Mitsone dam in Kachin State. Nay Pyi Taw clearly wanted a counter-balance to China and stressed the need for the country to benefit from access to foreign capital, technology and expertise, effectively declaring that Myanmar was now "open for business". There is clear evidence that many western investors are waiting to move into the country, following the easing or removal of sanctions, to gain access to its natural resources and to invest in such areas as tourism, financial services, telecommunications and infrastructure. The potential is great, as trade with Europe currently only accounts for 1.9% of Myanmar's total commerce.

In the short to medium term there would be a focus on labour intensive industries such as agriculture, which could quickly provide jobs to the huge numbers of unemployed, particularly in areas of recent conflict, and improve the life of the Myanmar people. The rural areas in particular needed to develop a proper infrastructure and to have access to clean water and technology. A policy of assisting the grassroots, through initiatives such as providing credit and access to soft loans, would also focus on encouraging SMEs to become established. In the longer term the knowledge-based sector could be developed. There was also a desperate need to improve the education system which was woefully under-resourced.

The EU had already announced a EUR150 million two-year aid package to help Myanmar develop its health and education facilities. It is also aimed at assisting the agriculture sector and to help those who have been displaced by conflict. The package is relatively small but compares very favourably with the EUR 173 million that the EU has given to the country since 1996.

A constant theme - and one also recognised by some Ministers - was the lack of business experience and know-how in government and business circles. Many speakers argued that politicians and civil servants did not understand economics and business. The inflated rate of exchange of the Myanmar currency, which harmed its exports, was cited as an example of economic illiteracy on the part of many in government. The absence of a functioning central bank was another problem. The consistent message from government and non-government interlocutors was the need for assistance and expertise from the international community to

enable Myanmar to "catch up" after 50 years of isolation.

In conclusion, the delegation travelled to Myanmar at a time of significant political, economic and social change. There were many encouraging signs - and these were recognised by the opposition - but it remained to be seen how "irreversible" the changes were. The by-elections of 1 April would be a major test of the reforms but they were only a step in a long process that would stretch on until the 2015 general elections and beyond.

Conclusions

The European Parliament delegation was encouraged by the positive trends in Myanmar and hoped that these would lead to the establishment of a real democracy. The visit had been "very fruitful" and members were very satisfied to have held meetings at the highest levels. They were impressed by the commitment expressed by the President and other senior members of the government to embark on the "irreversible and sustainable" process of reform. They recalled the words of Aung San Suu Kyi that the most important thing for Myanmar now is hope and they urged the government to ensure that the hopes and optimism of the people should be fulfilled.

They underlined the need for the reform process to be sustainable and comprehensive. It was essential that legislation was in place to guarantee that the media was free and independent. They urged the government to ensure that all political prisoners were released and that there would be an impartial investigation of human rights abuses. They looked forward to the National Human Rights Commission becoming a fully independent body, in line with the Paris Principles. They welcomed all steps being taken to resolve the conflicts with armed insurgents from ethnic groups and stressed the importance of an inclusive process of reconciliation. They looked forward in particular to a settlement of the continuing struggle in Kachin State. In addition they stressed the need for the anomalous situation of the Rohingya people to be resolved and for them to be granted full citizenship.

They hoped that the current Myanmar parliament would be a step towards a genuinely democratic parliament which represented the will of all the people of Myanmar and that the assembly could be an active player in the reform process. The MEPs were keen to formalise relations between the European Parliament and the Myanmar Parliament and the Speaker of the Lower House and to hold regular meetings in the future. In particular they would welcome proposals for the European Parliament to assist the Myanmar Parliament in capacity building (e.g. seminars/training for staff).

A major test of the reform process would be whether the by-elections on 1 April were deemed to be "free, fair and credible". They welcomed the invitation (which came after their departure from Myanmar) to the European Union (including the European Parliament) to observe the by-elections. They looked forward to these elections being a significant milestone on the path to full democracy, particularly as they could lead to the NLD being present for the first time in the parliament. They urged the Myanmar authorities to investigate any irregularities in the campaign in a prompt and effective manner.

It was underlined that the European Union needed to play an important role in the change process in Myanmar and members welcomed the establishment of an EU office in Yangon as

a tangible sign of this commitment. They looked forward to a further easing of the EU restrictive measures following the Council meeting in late April - if the by-elections were adjudged to be in line with internationally accepted standards - while noting that consideration should be given to whether or not to retain some restrictive measures

The delegation strongly supported the economic reform process and looked forward to EU businesses playing a key role in the transformation of the economy. The development of rural areas and those where there had been armed insurgencies should be a particular priority, as they were suffering from a lack of infrastructure. All internally displaced people and refugees should be able to return to their homes and receive support in the resettlement process.

They stressed that the economic changes must be coupled with social reforms. The improvement of the standard of living of all peoples of Myanmar and the provision of employment opportunities must be a priority of the government. They emphasised too that there should be effective safeguards in place to ensure that the economic development was sustainable and did not result in any environmental damage. They welcomed the pledge of the EU to provide increased support totalling EUR150 million in the next two years, while stressing that this only represented a small amount of the development aid that would be needed. A fundamental element in the development of Myanmar was ensuring that everyone had proper access to education, training and healthcare.

In summary the parliamentarians were very positive about the changes taking place in Myanmar and looked forward to the reform process being maintained. They underlined the important that could be played by the European Union in assisting the changes and in ensuring that Myanmar re-emerged as a prosperous, peaceful and democratic state which was able to achieve its great potential. In the words of Aung San Suu Kyi: "There is so much that we need to do for our country. I don't think that we can afford to wait". It was clear that the EU needs to act now and seize this window of opportunity.

NARRATIVE REPORT OF THE VISIT

26 February 2012

On arrival the delegation attended a briefing session on the current situation in Myanmar and its relations with the EU presented by Mr David Lipman, the EU Ambassador to the country. This covered the issue of political prisoners; the reform process; relations with the EU, in particular the sanctions and the ethnic conflicts. The information provided was invaluable in subsequent meetings and in the compilation of this report.

27 February 2012

In the morning the delegation made the 320 kilometres journey from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw which officially became the capital of Myanmar in 2005. Construction began on a greenfield site in 2002 and is still underway. Costs of the project so far are estimated at between \$3 billion and \$4 billion,

Minister for Railways, HE U Aung Min

Despite his title, Mr U Aung Min delegated responsibility for railways to a deputy and his main responsibility was the peace process in the country.

President U Thein Sein had set out three stages for national reconciliation: i) signing the ceasefires; ii) engaging in political dialogues and relocating those affected by the conflicts; iii) convening a "National Assembly" in the Myanmar Parliament in which all peoples and political parties would be represented.

The National Assembly would address all political, social, economic and environmental issues, such as state governance, federalism, devolution of powers from the centre, environmental protection, and extraction of raw materials. All national minorities would be able to participate fully in this process. The current constitution had provisions for minority language rights and other cultural and social rights. The Kayin (Karen) minority had already been granted the right to education in its own language. National minorities were already well represented in the regional governments and the Vice President of Myanmar was from the Shan minority.

Mr U Aung Min stressed that peace needed to be permanent and that the government would also address such issues as dealing with human rights violations by all sides in the conflicts. Norway was currently advising on these issues.

There was a separate peace council dealing with the insurgency in Kachin State where conflict still continued. There were reports that an agreement was within reach and the President had stated that "whatever we can concede we should concede". Talks would reopen in the following week. Mr U Aung Min could not give details on how the EU might assist in mediation or post conflict support, as this was not within his competence.

Mr U Aung Min was nevertheless very keen for the EU to witness the unfolding of the peace process and to advise the Myanmar government on how to take it forward. One practical element was demining and in Kayin state former insurgents and the Myanmar military were working together to dismantle old mines.

20% of national GDP had previously been spent on defence but this had been reduced to 12% as a result of the peace process. Mr U Aung Min looked forward to this being reduced to nought.

Three groups of people were affected by the conflicts: i) 146,000 IDPs; ii) 200,000 refugees - inside and outside camps; iii) two million migrants.

Priority had been given to IDPs, most of whom would return to their villages if there were no conflict. The government regarded them as "brothers and sisters" and if they returned they would have to be provided with food, shelter and jobs. They would get back their land or - if landless - be given employment.

There was no problem with the Bangkok government regarding those refugees and migrants who had gone to Thailand and the most important thing was to receive international support and funding. 33 NGOs were active in the border areas and were assisting the displaced persons.

Norway had pledged food aid and assist with handling the funds coming from donors. There had been other pledges of help from countries such as South Korea, Japan and a number of EU member states. A donor conference was scheduled to be held in Yangon in April. It normally took six to twelve months to receive money but Norway had committed to supply "seed funds" in the near future. Mr U Aung Min would be travelling to Oslo in April to discuss the issue

Major-General Hla Min, Minister for Defence

Major-General Hla Min noted that the military's role was defined by the 2008 constitution and the armed forces would carry out their role in conformity with these guidelines. They gave their full support and loyalty to the government and sought to ensure the security and defence of the nation. Their guiding principles were "sovereignty, union solidarity and solidarity between the national races".

The role of the armed forces previously extended to legislative and judicial matters but it now focussed on external defence. The military could still respond in the case of natural disasters and was ready to work to the benefit of the people.

The Law on National Military Service had not come into force yet and military service was voluntary at present. Women were employed in the military service - for example as teachers, nurses and clerical workers - but not in the infantry

The Minister stressed that the government's defence strategy was now based on civilian principles and that the military would cooperate with any individual or political party that was elected. The President and parliament were working very hard to achieve inclusiveness in the political process.

It was clear that after 60 years all sides in Myanmar were keen to have peace, although it was difficult to achieve this in a short period of time.

Some of the insurgents were seeking democracy and religious freedoms; however others were more interested in exploiting natural resources for their own purposes, engaging in opium trafficking or extorting money from the local population. There was evidence of some involvement by foreign groups in these activities. The importance of providing employment for the local population was also stressed.

The government was seeking to achieve a ceasefire with all insurgent forces, although the situation was very volatile. It was following a step by step approach of: i) achieving a ceasefire; ii) taking confidence building measures; iii) developing the affected regions; iv) engaging the local people; v) encouraging them to give up their arms.. There had also previously been efforts to involve elderly members of the population to take part in the political process and encourage the younger generation to take part in regional development activities. Young people were being encouraged to participate in the border guard forces. It was very difficult to predict a timeframe for all these steps.

The Minister described allegations of human rights abuses by the military as "propaganda" and urged outsiders to judge the country correctly. The EP Delegation insisted on the need

for independent investigations of any abuses. The Minister referred to the report of UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Mr Tomas Ojea Quintana, who had reported on human rights cases. The government had investigated the allegations and claimed that most of them were without foundation.

He accepted that some individual soldiers had committed human rights abuses - "I am not saying we are flawless" - but they had been punished under military law or - in some cases - in the civil courts. Allegations of 35 cases of human rights abuses in Kachin State had been found to be baseless. There had been five cases in Shan State and those responsible had been punished. The military was also tackling the issue of forced labour which had been based on legislation that no longer applied.

Mr U Win Myint, Minister for Commerce

Mr U Win Myint had previously been the President of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

He gave an overview of the process of liberalisation of the economy, stressing the need to carry out further reforms of the financial sector and to liberalise trade. This went hand in hand with the political reform process. He contended that the rapid change had surprised the outside world. The economy had been liberalised and the private sector was now able to carry out business unhindered.

The Minister underlined the need for EU and US support, as the sanctions had caused much suffering. The Ministry of Commerce was keen to develop trade relations and to encourage foreign investment. In the early years of independence Myanmar had enjoyed good trade relations with European countries - particularly Germany - but these had deteriorated under the military regime and the country had eventually become heavily dependent on its trade with China.

MEPs asked which sectors in Myanmar were likely to attract investment in the case of EU sanctions being lifted. Other issues raised included the possibility of using oil and gas resources to promote economic development in Myanmar, rather than exporting most of the production to China and India. The prospects of off-shore drilling for oil were also raised. Discussions were underway with the IMF on the liberalisation of the banking market.

Tuesday 28 February 2012

Mr U Khin Aung Myint, Speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House)

Mr Khin Aung Mint gave an overview of the fledgling parliamentary system in Myanmar. Preparations were underway for the new financial year in April 2012 with discussions on the national plan and the budget.

Elections to the Lower House were based on townships and there were 474 seats. The Upper House had 224 representatives from states and regions. There were 18 women in the Upper House and 14 in the Lower House. 17 political parties were represented, including various ethnic nationalities. The Parliament reflected the "will, expectations and voice" of the people.

There were 110 representatives of the military in the Lower House and 56 in the Upper House. The regional parliaments also had representatives from the armed forces. The Speaker stressed that there was unity between the elected members and the military representatives, who did not hold extreme views and would not disturb parliament. They would support legislation that was in the interests of the people, such as granting amnesty to political prisoners. He noted that the military had evolved over the years and that the 2008 constitution was a result of its endeavours. Any change to this situation had to depend on what the people wanted.

The two houses had equal status and legislation could only be adopted if both chambers approved it. A joint session was convened in the case of disagreement between the two houses. Priority was given to the needs of the state over the interests of the political parties. Work was also underway to develop the regional parliaments and this was another area in which there was a need for assistance in capacity building. Mr Khin Aung Mint stressed that the Myanmar parliament was very open to learning from the experience of long established parliaments and he was examining this issue.

Outlining the post-independence history of the country, the Speaker noted that Myanmar had more than 100 ethnic groups and that there was a need to ensure national unity. There had been risks of secession in 1962 and this had obliged the military to take power on two occasions (whereas in Thailand the military had taken over more than 20 times). None of the national ethnic groups currently talked about secession; however it was not yet certain that the union would not disintegrate. The military had no intention of assuming power again and the reform process was irreversible.

The main challenge facing the country now was economic development as this would ensure political stability. Economic assistance from the international community was an essential part in this development. In the past some countries had tried to promote regime change by the use of sanctions.

Mr U Soe Thein, Minister for Industry/Chairman of Investment Commission

The Ministry's motto was "Resources are limited. Creativity is unlimited".

The Minister stressed that the global community should give credit to the Myanmar government for the reforms that it was carrying out. The President was "climbing the mountain but had not yet reached the summit". He underlined, too, that "everyone should be reformist but that some were still sleeping".

Assistance should focus on the people at the grassroots. The political reforms needed to be combined with economic and social reforms - including job creation and poverty alleviation - in order to lead to visible benefits for the people. Such reforms would include healthcare, education and the power supply (where there was great potential for solar power). There was a particular need for reform to be extended to those who had been displaced by the conflict in border areas and the Minister outlined his work with the Mon and Kayin peoples.

The initial focus on employment creation needed to be on labour intensive industries, followed, at a later date, by the knowledge based sector. Currently the private sector made up

two thirds of the economy and this proportion could increase as state owned enterprises were sold off. The government should only be responsible for a small proportion of industry. The Minister also mentioned the importance of the garment and shoe manufacturing sectors.

There was great potential for the SME sector and the ministry had established an "Industry Development Bank" to provide assistance, through such initiatives as micro credits and micro finance. It would be an "incubator for SME projects". He was in touch with the German bank KfW on this initiative.

There was liberalisation of the agriculture sector and foreigners were being invited to lease land for perhaps 60 years. They could bring in expertise, technology and sources of capital.

The government was obliged to honour existing contracts with countries such as China; however in the future Myanmar should be using its gas and oil for its own development.

The Minister noted that a policy on public-private enterprises (PPEs) was being prepared. He accepted the need for the proportion of the education budget to rise from 4% but stressed that it was important to change the mindset of many in the Education Ministry who were currently afraid of managing a greater budget allocation. The government was keen to draw on the experience of foreign universities and the Minister had pushed strongly for foreign universities to be established in Myanmar, otherwise students would go abroad to study and stay there. There were also industrial training centres, including South Korean centres on garments, one German and two Indian centres for machinery and a Chinese training centre.

There was recognition of the possible environmental impact of these developments and an environment law had been prepared. The new Forestry Ministry was also dealing with the environment. The Minister belonged to the Green Economy Growth Group and work was underway with German experts on renewable energies. The Minister recognised the need to catch up with the rest of the ASEAN countries in these areas.

There were four criteria for investment: i) protection of investors and a level playing field for local and foreign investors; ii) examination of the environmental impact of projects: iii) assessment of the social impacts of projects: iv) ensuring that the financial sector was transparent and accountable.

Mr U Tin Aye, Chairman of Election Commission

Mr U Tin Aye outlined the background and functions of the Election Commission noting that the membership of the body had changed since the 2010 elections. He had been nominated by the President, approved by Parliament and was appointed on 30 March 2011. He would hold office at the time of the 2015 general elections. His duties were to: i) convene free and fair elections: ii) deal with any complaints following the elections: iii) register political parties and ensure that they act in accordance with the national legislation.

The by-elections were taking place in 48 seats on 1 April 2012 (40 constituencies (123 candidates) in the Lower House, 6 constituencies (23 candidates) in the Upper House and 2 constituencies (6 candidates) in regional assemblies). These had been announced on 29 December 2011 (i.e. 90 days in advance). He referred to the challenges to the legality of Aung San Suu Kyi's candidature (these were subsequently resolved in her favour). Although

- at the time of this meeting - Aung San Suu Kyi's case was still under consideration she had been allowed to campaign. In Mr U Tin Aye's view the authorities had "been very generous with her". He also noted that complaints against candidates could only be made by competing candidates.

The Chairman gave details of the completion of voter lists, awareness/education campaigns for election officials and voters. Lessons had been learned from the experiences of the 2010 elections. He highlighted the inexperience of voters and political parties as a particular challenge. Nevertheless, he believed that the upcoming by-elections would be free and fair.

All citizens would be allowed to vote as long as both parents were nationals of Myanmar. Voter registration was based on data collected at village level. Overseas workers were also entitled to vote and to be candidates. There were restrictions on candidates spending and they were required to detail how they had spent the money.

He would welcome international observers but stressed that this area was not within his responsibilities. In 2010 the authorities had elected representatives of foreign embassies and NGOs to observe the election process and they had given positive reports. He regretted that the EU and American embassies had not accepted this invitation.

Mr U Maung Myint, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs

The Minister stressed that the current process of reform was "sustainable and irreversible". He outlined the infrastructure that was being built in Nay Pyi Taw in order to prepare for Myanmar's chairmanship of ASEAN and the training that officials were undergoing in Phnom Penh and Bali. 20 large buildings were being contracted.

He stressed that Myanmar sought to maintain peace and stability and to abide by human rights resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. He did not consider that there was any need for further UN resolutions on the human rights situation in the country. His government had already announced that it would sign action plans on issues concerning child soldiers and additional protocols on labour rights issues. The new Myanmar Human Rights Commission had already been established and had received 1800 letters from the grassroots level. 1600 of these cases had already been resolved.

Mr U Maung Myint argued that the previous government had been in favour of establishing democracy but that this had to be "home-grown" and took time as peace and stability needed to be secured. The sanctions had not led to the current reform process which was a result of the government's own decisions. There was now no further need for sanctions which had a detrimental impact on the general population.

The Minister outlined the current situation regarding the insurgencies, noting that the government had urged the 17 armed groups to re-establish themselves as border guards. So far six groups had agreed to do so and negotiations were underway with the remainder. Memoranda of understanding would replace the current "gentlemen's agreements". With regard to the Kachin Independence Army the government was exercising maximum restraint and its troops would only respond if attacked.

Mr U Maung Myint noted that foreign diplomats based in Myanmar would be invited to observe the by-elections but that this issue was a matter for the Election Commission (contrary to the message received from that body).

Finally the Minister contended that there were 6365 Rohingya refugees who had Myanmar passports and who were still in Bangladesh. They were being processed and would be allowed to return to their country. This contrasted with the Dhaka government's figure of 28,000. Mr U Maung Myint noted, however, that only Myanmar citizens would be allowed to return and that those who had married Bangladeshis were not Myanmar citizens. In addition he noted that his government "will not receive the babies of Rohingya-Bengali couples".

H.E. Mr U Thein Sein, President of Myanmar

The President stated that Myanmar was a "practising democracy with a functioning separation of powers". The military was bound by the constitution and its Commander-in-Chief was nominated by the President. Breaches of federal law were prosecuted by the judiciary who ensured that peace and stability were safeguarded.

Priority was given to achieving national reconciliation and the government had made considerable progress in achieving ceasefires with the armed groups. After the consolidation of peace there would be endeavours to improve living conditions in affected areas. Poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals were also priority areas for action.

The President stressed that the Election Commission was an independent body. The electoral law had been amended to enable the National League for Democracy to be registered and Aung San Suu Kyi could stand for election. The government was not putting any obstacles in the way of her eligibility.

The President stressed that Myanmar was one of only five ASEAN countries to have a National Human Rights Commission. He contended that there had not been gross violations of human rights but there were instances of child labour and recruitment which were being prosecuted. He emphasised that there was a "vibrant civil society in the area of human rights"

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was essential in order to achieve these goals and fulfil the great economic potential of Myanmar. However, the country's development had been restricted by the sanctions and they needed to be lifted in order to encourage growth. He was pleased that some sanctions had already been eased. He welcomed the EUR150 million had been pledged by the EU in 2012-2013 which was mainly for education and health.

Mr Thura U Shwe Mann, Pylthu Hluttaw (Lower House) Speaker

The European Parliament delegation presented a letter to the Speaker, inviting him to the Brussels or Strasbourg and stressed that it was an opportune time to establish the relationship between the two bodies.

Mr Thura U Shwe Mann welcomed the visit of the MEPs and stressed that this was a great boost to the Myanmar Parliament. He stressed that his assembly had very little experience but that "it was trying hard". There were 17 parties in the parliament and many different ethnic groups were represented. There were no extreme positions and all wanted to work for "the union and the good of the people".

The Parliament was a key element in the democracy and the parliamentarians were keen to learn. The Speaker made a strong request for the European Parliament to provide assistance and capacity enhancement programmes. He was also interested in how the EU dealt with the challenge of ensuring the rights of ethnic and religious minorities.

It was emphasised that the by-elections on 1 April would be free and fair and that the successful candidates would be welcomed into the Parliament.

The Speaker argued that media freedoms needed to be expanded in order that the "fourth pillar" could provide the necessary checks and balances. Political and economic reform would go hand in hand.

MEPs complimented the Parliament on the presence of so many female MPs at the meeting, while noting that women only made up 3% of the current Parliament. The Speaker stressed that more women should be encouraged to get into politics, although there were no quotas. He anticipated that the proportion of women would increase after the upcoming by-elections as 30 to 40% of the candidates were women.

In response to questions about the 25% of seats that were occupied by the military, the Speaker argued that nothing was permanent and there may well be constitutional amendments in the future. He noted that there had been 120 amendments into the Indian constitution in 60 years.

Mr U Hla Myint Oo, Chairman of the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) International Relations Committee

Mr U Hla Myint Oo noted that the Committee dealt with matters relating to the United Nations; the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) - which it joined in September 2011; and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The Committee had been established on 5 September 2011 and was one of 19 committees in the Lower House and 12 in the Upper House. The Lower House Committee scrutinised the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Relations Committee of the Upper House scrutinised the budget of the Ministry of Defence. This was a new and very challenge. The budget for the 2012-2013 financial year would shortly be ready. MEPs stressed that the Committees should be insisting that ministers were brought to account Mr U Hla Myint Oo agreed and stressed that Ministers were required to explain their proposals and that 75 parliamentarians had already raised questions about the budget..

The Myanmar government's foreign policy was based on the principles of independence, non-alignment, peaceful co-existence with a special focus on its neighbours. He recognised that closer links with ASEAN might have an impact on Myanmar's independence and that this had to be watched closely. .

Members had visited Russia, India, China and Cambodia recently to learn from other parliaments and were keen to learn from the European Parliament.

Mr Htay Oo, USDP Chairman

Mr Htay Oo gave an outline of the development of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) which had been formed from the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) in March 2010 ahead of the national elections. The membership of the USDA had been 26 million. Funding for the USDP came from membership fees, donors, business enterprises, livestock and agricultural concerns.

In the 2010 elections the USDP had won 883 seats out of 1154 total seats in the two houses of parliament. "We don't call ourselves the ruling party - we are the winning party", the Chairman stated, however the USDP regarded other parties as its colleagues. All 48 seats in the upcoming by-elections had been held by the USDP.

The military representatives in the parliament were separate from the members of the USDP, although they would "join hands for the defence of the country". The armed forces had a key role to play in national development and the current situation required that they be present in Parliament so that they might take part in the discussions.

Myanmar had over 100 nationalities and had suffered in the past from disunity. It was important that the country should not disintegrate and there should be peace and stability. Cooperation with the international community was an essential element in achieving this goal.

The current reform process was irreversible and it was necessary for the EU to relax its restrictive measures. Legislation was being prepared to ensure media freedom as this would play a vital role.

Mr Htay Oo stated that there were "no political prisoners per se", however there were prisoners charged with various offences. The President was releasing some of these individuals and these actions were supported by the USDP. There were differences between the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) (AAPP) and the government on the issue of how to define a "political prisoner". Anyone who was still in prison for political activities would be released very soon. Any former political prisoners would be granted passports if they applied for them through the correct channels.

Wednesday 29 February 2012

In the morning the delegation made the return trip from Nay Pyi Taw to Yangon.

Meeting with Ms Aung San Suu Kyi

Ms Aung San Suu Kyi was strongly critical of the Union Election Commission (UEC) for being slow and reactive. There were also question marks over its independence and the speed of its reaction to complaints, including the desecration of banners of the NLD.

There would be no problems on the actual day of the election as there were sufficient party members to observe the proceedings. However there were concerns about the conduct of the campaign and the advance voting, which had been a major factor in the elections of 2010. On that occasion people had not made complaints because of the expense involved in doing so. Following the elections it would be necessary to tackle such issues as the release of prisoners and the ceasefires.

Ms Aung San Suu Kyi considered that the Human Rights Commission was not taking any initiative and that its lack of experience in working in a democratic environment was hampering its work. Indeed, there was a more general reluctance of people in official positions to take responsibility. The Government wanted to reform but "did not seem to know how to go about it".

The current constitution was not going to lead to unity and it did not give any clear guidance on how the national minorities would be accommodated in the state - "everyone was afraid to mention federalism". Ms Aung San Suu Kyi stressed that the minorities were not seeking to secede but wanted autonomy and equality. The conflict in Kachin State was likely to intensify. The constitution also caused concern as it had provisions to enable the Commander-in-Chief to take power at any time.

It was not possible to state with any certainty that the current reform process was irreversible as the position of the army was not clear and it was not evident who was in charge. Ms Aung San Suu Kyi was not over-concerned about the army's presence in the parliament as it gave MPs and the military the opportunity to learn how to work together and could lead to a change in the army's mindset.

Ms Aung San Suu Kyi believed that there was great scope for reconciliation at the present time as people were full of hope and goodwill. Quoting Bishop Desmond Tutu, she stated "I do not want retributive justice but restorative justice". It was essential to ensure that people's hopes were not disappointed. She was "cautiously optimistic"

She believed that there should not be a rush to dismantle the sanctions and recalled the experiences of 1990 when arrests of the opposition began three months after the elections. She argued that the sanctions had had a political impact. The textile sector had suffered after US sanctions in 2003 but this had been temporary as they had been followed by Chinese investment. The main competitors for Myanmar in the garments industry were Laos and Cambodia as salaries in China and Vietnam were rising. The granting to Myanmar of GSP status would provide a boost for the next ten years or so.

Mr U Win Mra, Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission

All 15 members of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) were present at the meeting. They included retired government officials, five retired diplomats, representatives of seven ethnic groups and academics.

Mr U Win Mra stressed that the NHRC adhered as far as possible to the Paris Principles (*The Paris Principles are guidelines on national guidelines for human rights bodies and stress the need for representation of different ethnic groups and sectors*) and that they enjoyed

independence to carry out their mandate. One member claimed that the Commission was currently "99% compliant" with the Principles. They were not attached to any government ministry and appointed their own staff (currently 22 but shortly to increase to 60).

They had written to the President calling for the release of political prisoners - a step which was unprecedented in Myanmar's history. On 10 December 2011 they had issued a statement highlighting the importance of the UN Declaration on Human Rights - this was also an unprecedented step as in the past the talk had been of "human responsibilities".

Members of the Commission had travelled to Kachin State and had visited refugee camps. They had also visited prisons including Myitkina and Insein and made recommendations on the humanitarian situation. They were allowed to talk to prisoners of conscience - (the government states that there are no political prisoners and there are sensitivities over the terms used). Mr U Win Mra stressed that the most important issue was to ensure the release of these prisoners. More than 6300 prisoners had been released but the international community claimed that there were still 2000 political prisoners. Aung Sung Suu Kyi had stated that there were 271 "political prisoners".

Four members were sitting full time and the Commission now had its own sub-committee. More than 500 complaints had been received in the last five months. The public was showing a great interest in the Committee's work which had been given publicity in the media. There had been 71 cases against the government and over 300 cases were private. There had been success in mediating between individuals who were in dispute.

As an advisory body the Commission did not have powers of enforcement and had to refer cases through the Cabinet Office to the relevant Ministry. Cooperation with the Parliament was not yet formalised but went through the "old boys' network".

Thursday 1 March

Visit to EU funded project in Dala Township

The delegation travelled by bus and ferry to the Dala Township which lies across the Yangon River from the city of Yangon. This area is still largely rural as there is no bridge across the river. Nevertheless (according to government figures which may significantly underestimate the real situation) the population has increased from 85,000 in 2004 to 146,000 at present, boosted by workers who commute daily by ferry to Yangon from Dala Township where living costs are lower. There has also been an influx of those escaping conflict zones elsewhere in Myanmar. The average daily income is around 75 cents and 50% of the population relies on casual work.

The delegation visited projects operated by the French NGO *Triangle Génération Humanaire* and 80% funded by Europe Aid. The total cost of the projects in the district is EUR1,665,000 over the period from January 2011 to June 2013. They encompass health improvements, water and sanitation services and improving economic conditions. Six wards out of the 24 in the district were selected for the projects.

Members visited adult literacy classes, sewing classes and a project to provide drinking water through the management of a small lake. The project workers aimed to pursue a

"bottom-up" approach based on partnership with the local population.

Panel on economic and development issues

The following points were made in the discussion, portraying a damning picture of the current economic situation of Myanmar.

Myanmar was undergoing multiple and simultaneous transitions with political and economic change and a new push for reconciliation with the national minorities. It was important that any economic development be sustainable and should not take place at the expense of the environment.

A contrast was drawn with Indonesia which had already experienced economic growth before embarking upon political change, whereas the Myanmar economy was not yet normalised. Nevertheless there was optimism and a sense of commitment to change. "Under the previous government there had been no light at the end of the tunnel as there was no tunnel". ASEAN could play an important role in this transition, particularly with the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 which would permit the free flow of goods, labour and capital. .

It was essential that the officials managing the change process developed the necessary expertise and awareness. Useful lessons could be learned from the transitions in neighbouring countries. There was a role for both the government and the private sector in this process - "multi-dimensional challenges needed multi -dimensional responses".

The initial field of expansion needed to be in areas such as agriculture and other labour intensive industries which could lead quickly to employment growth. The SME sector could be an engine for this growth and there was great potential for the development of light manufacturing. Special economic zones in the border areas could give employment to ethnic minorities.

The garment sector had been hit very hard the US sanctions of 2003. The sector had employed between 350,000 and 400,000 workers, most of whom were girls between 15 and 25 years with limited education. This workforce had decreased to 60,000 by 2008, the decline having been accelerated by the failure of the "Saffron Revolution". The withdrawal of GSP privileges by the EU had also hit the textile industry and there was a plea for the EU to reinstate these privileges so that Myanmar might have a level playing field with its neighbours. Currently there were between 80,000 and 100,000 working in the sector in 175 factories, 20 of which were owned by foreign firms and all of which were now private. There was a huge potential in the garment industry as workers could be trained and become productive in around ten days. The industry was trying to adhere to international standards for working conditions and the government was developing special industrial zones to encourage growth.

Members were informed that the agriculture sector accounted for 50% of Myanmar's GDP and two thirds of its workforce. 35 million people lived in rural areas on small plots of land. Many families subsisted on less than \$2 a day and there was no institutionalised credit system leading to loan sharks lending money at interest rates of 10 to 15% per month. The sector had suffered from 50 years of "mismanagement and neglect". Nevertheless it was a sector in which there was the potential for rapid expansion - "a quick win" - as long as

farmers got access to credit, markets, technology and technological know-how. There was also a need for a major electrification of the rural areas.

Myanmar was described as an "African country in the middle of South East Asia" suffering from poor education, a stagnant economy, chronic malnutrition, rural debt and archaic technology. Only 4% of the national budget was earmarked to the Ministry of Education (although there was other budget provision for education) and a further 4% was allocated to healthcare. Between 10 to 20% of the labour force had left the country, of which around two million were in Thailand. Nevertheless Myanmar had been one of the leading Asian economies in the 1950s and the "gene pool" and human resource potential were still there. There were encouraging developments such as the Myanmar students going to study in the EU, the USA and Australia.

The political opening had not been accompanied by real economic reform and there was no trained cadre of economists. The Central Bank of Myanmar did not have a monetary policy department and the generals "did not understand economics" - indeed the Vice President had stated that he was "proud of the strong currency". As a consequence the kyat was overvalued by 30%, hitting exports hard.

The reform steps taken by the government merited a positive response from the international community, particularly to ensure that they were sustainable. There was an overwhelming need for international assistance, particularly in capacity building. The EU should push the US to lift sanctions, which had no impact other than encouraging hardliners in the regime and keeping the poor in a state of dire poverty, while not affecting the generals. The window of opportunity for action was limited, particularly as the generation that had experience of the pre-1962 Myanmar was dying off.

Western sanctions had not had an effect on the generals who had changed their policy "of their own free will". The sanctions had, however, left the way clear for China to establish an overwhelming economic presence and it was now entrenched in the country - Myanmar "became part of China because of the sanctions". There was currently a rush from ASEAN countries and India to move into Myanmar in anticipation of a lifting of western sanctions and a subsequent influx of western investment.

There was a culture of obedience to authority and the "xenophobic military" had not been prepared to cede any powers. The generals had, however, lost much credibility after the Saffron Revolution and the tardy response to the 2008 cyclone. The construction of Nay Pyi Taw had also been viewed negatively by the population. The former ruler Than Shwe wanted to prevent another strongman taking power as he was afraid for his own safety.

The meeting was followed by a press conference.

Friday 2 March 2012

Panel with political parties

The National Democratic Force (NDF) representative stated that his party's approach was based on cooperation rather than confrontation and was working for the good of the people. He believed that the West should wait to assess its position until after the elections. There

were still disputes with the National League for Democracy (NLD) over the party emblem. There had been inconclusive discussions with Aung San Suu Kyi over joining forces.

The NDF aimed to promote a social market and a mixed economy. There had been economic mismanagement by the military regime for many years. Farmers had not enjoyed the right to own their land and had often been dispossessed without compensation. There also needed to be a clearer demarcation between the state and the Union budgetary systems.

The Democratic Party Myanmar (DPM) Chairman U Thu Wai condemned the 2010 elections as having been riddled with fraud. The party representative Daw Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein complained about her experiences as a candidate in the 2010 general election when she was declared the loser. In their view the by-elections on 1 April would be a significant improvement on the 2010 elections.

DPM speakers pointed to the unfamiliarity of voters with election processes after more than 50 years of dictatorship and stressed the important role to be played by NGOs and the media in educating people. They had not obtained voter lists at the time of the 2010 elections as they would have had to pay the Central Election Commission 20 kyat for each voter. The costs of the list would be reduced for the by-elections (13 kyat for each page of 10 voters).

The representatives of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) stressed that their party was striving with the people for peace and sustainable development.

The NDF and the DPM expressed themselves to be largely in favour of a federal state that would accommodate the specific situation of the national minorities. The USDP representatives were not prepared to give a view on the issue, other than to note that the problem should be resolved in the spirit of the 1947 Panglong Agreement on regional autonomy.

Speakers noted that the parliamentarians from the military had initially not participated actively in debates; however they were now speaking and working together with other parties.

There was general support from the parties for there to be international observers at the 2015 general elections, particularly from ASEAN countries. The NDP speaker stressed the limited resources of his party and the resultant difficulties in monitoring all the polling stations.

Ms Preeta Law, Deputy Representative/Officer-in-charge UNHCR

Ms Law noted that the UNHCR had been in Myanmar since 1994 and had worked primarily in northern Rakhine state dealing with the return of the Rohingya refugees. Most of the returns had taken place by 2000 and the total involved was over 200,000. The returns had not followed the normal tripartite arrangement involving UNHCR at the centre, but had been organised through a bilateral arrangement between the two governments. Between 2005 and 2009 there had been substantial illegal departures by boat to Bangladesh and ASEAN countries. Following the 2010 elections the departures by boat from northern Rakhine state had declined but they had now increased again.

The focus of the UNHCR had been firstly on reintegration and subsequently on a

stabilisation programme tackling the issue of statelessness of returned Rohingyas. The visit to Myanmar in 2009 of UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, had persuaded the Myanmar government to agree that the UNHCR could continue to work on priority areas such as infrastructure, health, education and essential services. The UNHCR programme continues to operate, supported by a range of donors.

Since 2010 there had been a shift in government policy towards the Rohingyas with public statements that they were citizens of Myanmar and not "Bengalis". They had been allowed to vote in the 2010 elections, using temporary registration cards. The UNHCR had offered assistance to enable this process to be carried out more systematically but this was not accepted by the government. Nevertheless the Commission had provided assistance for some individuals. Some Rohingyas had been allowed to stand for election on the USDP list and one (a former UNHCR official) had been elected to Parliament, although he was not officially a Myanmar citizen.

The UNDP had proposed that Rohingyas should be naturalised citizens of Myanmar but they had rejected this idea, considering that it implied a "second class citizenship". UNDP had also wanted to present a handbook on statelessness produced by the Interparliamentary Union but this had not yet been possible.

There had been no government policy changes since the 2010 elections and the Rohingya continued to face heavy restrictions and discrimination. An MP from northern Rakhine state had raised the issue of freedom of movement and higher education but the standard answer was still that they were "illegal immigrants".

UNHCR had unhindered access to northern Rakhine state and was able on occasions to make a difference in individual cases, such as those of unregistered children. There was also work to help the Rohingya integrate into the Myanmar state as they were often isolated by language and very different cultural practices.

Children from couples whose marriages had not been officially sanctioned by the state were blacklisted. There were also restrictions on how many children Rohingyas could have but these could be circumvented if the parents had money (most do not). One positive development was the transfer of 7,000 children from the black-list to the official family list.

Below the surface there were real tensions in northern Rakhine state between the Rakhine and the Rohingya and a growing debate about the position of Muslims in the region. The central government was also suspicious of the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) which had enjoyed electoral success in 2010 (the second largest party after the USDP) and was based in Sittwe, a city that had a tradition of being a hotbed of pro-democracy protests.

The EP Delegation noted that it was estimated that there were over a million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh of whom 28,000 were in United Nations official refugee camps. The government in Dhaka considered the refugees to be citizens of Myanmar and had been concerned that the establishment of any additional camps would attract further refugees to settle.

The UNDP had also been working since 2004 in south east Myanmar with the Karen and Mon and also in the Tanintharyi (formerly Tenasserim) Region. They had been authorised to work with "people affected by population movements" as the government had never used the term "IDPs". The government restricted access to the areas for "security reasons", while UNDP continues to request unimpeded access. The situation was changing slowly but there were still severe restrictions on its work which involves protection and assistance. UNDP targeted areas where there was an IDP presence and also help with the return of refugees from Thailand.

The government has declared that it wants to see an end to the refugee camps in Thailand but that at present the peace talks with insurgent groups are its priority. Their other focus is on the return of IDPs and then resettlement of refugees, an approach shared by the Karen National Union (KNU). UNHCR draws a distinction between the IDPs and the refugees who have been involved in armed conflict. The Government had requested that they do not engage with IDPs involved in armed conflict and any future activity in this area would have to be negotiated with the authorities.

It was important that NGOs should play an active role in Myanmar and the UNDP was highly dependent on their work. A significant number of NGOs had begun operations in the country, while the local groups were urgently in need of technical support. It was essential to update the archaic procedures under which foreign NGOs were required to operate.



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

*Delegation for relations with the countries of Southeast Asia and the Association of
Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)*

**1st EP-Myanmar Interparliamentary Meeting
YANGON, NAY PYI TAW, 26 February - 2 March 2012**

PROGRAMME

**Sunday 26 February 2012
Yangon**

11.00 Coordination meeting of the Secretariat with German Embassy representatives

Individual arrivals of Members and staff at Yangon airport and transfer to
Chatrium Hotel Royal Lake Yangon
40, Natmauk Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon
Tel: (951) 544-500, 544-266
Fax: (951) 544-400
c/o Mr Naing Naing Tun
www.chatriumhotelyangon.com

20.30-22.00 Briefing by EU Ambassador on the political and economic situation in Myanmar
Venue: **Mandalay Room**, Chatrium Hotel Royal Lake Yangon

**Monday 27 February 2012
Yangon – Nay Pyi Taw**

06.00 Check-out and bring luggage downstairs

06.30 Breakfast at the hotel

07.00 Departure by bus to Nay Pyi Taw

13.30 Arrival in Nay Pyi Taw and check in at
Thingaha Hotel
No. 3, Hotel Zone
Nay Pyi Taw
Tel: (95-67) 414123-34
Fax: (95-67) 414135

Lunch (own arrangement)

14.15 Leave Thingaha Hotel to the Ministry Railways
(bring passports for security check)

15.00 Minister for Railways, U Aung Min

16.00 Minister for Defence, Maj-Gen Hla Min

17.00 Minister for Commerce, U Win Myint

Useful contacts: U San Lwin, Deputy Director –General/ **Daw Kaythi Soe, Director**
Political Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Tel: (95-67) 412-053, 412-359, **412-010 (office)**

MFA Protocol officer: Mr Thet Tun 067-412.061
MFA Consular department: 067-412185 – U Sein Oo

18.00 Return to Thingaha Hotel

Dinner (own arrangement)

Tuesday 28 February 2012
Nay Pyi Taw

07.15 Breakfast at the hotel

08.15 Leave Thingaha Hotel to the Parliament
(bring passports for security check)

09.00 Meeting with Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker
(Upper House) U Khin Aung Myint

10.00 Minister for Industry / Chairman of Investment Commission
U Soe Thein

11.00 Chairman of Election Commission
U Tin Aye

12.00 Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs: U Maung Myint

13.30 Return to Thingaha Hotel

Lunch (own arrangement)

14.40 Leave Thingaha Hotel to the President Office

15.00 Meeting with President
HE U Thein Sein

- 16.00 Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker
(Lower House) Thura U Shwe Mann
- 17.00 Chairman of the Pyithu Hluttaw
International Relations Committee, U Hla Myint Oo
- 18.00 USDP Chairman Htay Oo
- 19.30 Return to Thingaha Hotel
- Dinner (own arrangement)

Wednesday 29 February 2012 Nay Pyi Taw - Yangon
--

- 07.00 Check-out and bring luggage
- 07.30 Breakfast at the hotel
- 08.30 Depart by bus from Nay Pyi Taw to Yangon
- 13.30 Arrival at **Chatrium Hotel Royal Lake Yangon** and check in
40, Natmauk Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon
Tel: (951) 544-500, 544-266
Fax: (951) 544-400
c/o Mr Naing Naing Tun
www.chatriumhotelyangon.com
- Lunch (own arrangement)
- 15.30 Departure from Chatrium Hotel for
- 16.00 Meeting with **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi** at her residence followed by meeting with
the press
54 **University Avenue**, Yangon
Tel: (951) 534-365 (Residence), (951) 730-00740 (NLD office)
- 18.00 Meeting with **U Win Mra**, Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission
27 Pyay Road (closed to US CdA Residence)
Tel: (951) 654-668 (Office), (951) 579-715 (Home)
- 19.30 Return to Chatrium Hotel
- Dinner (own arrangement)

Thursday 1 March 2012
Yangon

- 07.30 Breakfast at the hotel
- 08.00 Depart from Chatrium Hotel for Jetty by minivan
- 08.30 Depart Jetty (boat)
- 09.00 Visit of EU funded project to Dala Township
- 11.00 Depart from Jetty
- 11.30 Arrival at jetty in Yangon, pick up by minivans and transfer back to Chatrium Hotel
- 12.00 Arrive Hotel
- Lunch (own arrangement)
- 15.00 Programme in Yangon, meetings at the Chatrium Hotel: at **Mandalay Room**

Panel on economic/ development issues

Winston Set Aung, Founder and Executive Director of ASIA Language and Business Academy, Tel: (951) 384-055, 720-966, Mobile: (959) 862-9957, (959) 510-7158, (959)-9929630

Daw Khine Khine Nwe, Executive Committee Member, Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association, Tel: (951) 214-829, Mobile: (959) 501-3329

Peter Thein, Myanmar Marketing Research & Development Co., Ltd, Tel: (951) 525-050, Mobile: (959) 731-65973, (959) 511-7859

Debbie Aung Din Taylor, International Development Enterprises (IDE), Tel. 95-1-555-221, 555-270, Mobile: (959) 501-8244

Martin Pun, Myanmar Business Coalition, Tel: (951) 514-598, Mobile: (959) 510-0222

- 17.00 Press Conference at the Chatrium Hotel (35 people) at **Bago Room**
- 18.30 Departure to German Ambassador's residence by minivans
- 19.00 Dinner hosted by the German Ambassador with local EU HOMs

**Friday 2 March 2012 (Public holiday)
Yangon**

Morning Breakfast at the hotel

10.00 Programme in Yangon, meetings at the Chatrium Hotel: at **Bago Room**

Panel with political parties

- **National Democratic Force**, U Khin Maung Swe, Tel: (951) 551-654, Mobile: (959) 505-9640
- **National Unity Party (NUP)**, U Khin Maung Gyi, Joint General Secretary, Tel: (951) 557-456, 557-459, 557-480
- **National League for Democracy (NLD)**, U Nyan Win, Tel: (951) 730-00740, Mobile: (959) 517-9247
- **Union Solidarity & Development Party (USDP)**, U Htay Oo, Secretary General, Tel: (95-67) 419-202
- **Shan Party (White Tiger)**, U Sin Tun Ayea, Tel: (951) 730-46206(if not travelling to Shan state)
- **Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP)**, U Oo Hla Saw, Mobile: (959) 731-13309, (959) 730-44927
- **Democratic Party Myanmar**, U Thu Wai, Tel: (951) 386-475

Lunch (own arrangement)

14.00 Meeting at **Bago Room**, Chatrium Hotel

Ms Preeta Law, Deputy Representative/Officer-in-Charge, **UNHCR**
on their operations in Myanmar c/o Ms Mu Mu Lwin: (951) 524-024-6
(lwlin@unhcr.org)

evening Departure to Europe



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Delegation for relations with the countries of Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

**1ST EU-MYANMAR INTERPARLIAMENTARY MEETING
YANGON - NAY PYI TAW, 26 FEBRUARY - 2 MARCH 2012**

PARTICIPANTS LIST (in order of protocol)

<u>MEMBERS</u>	<u>Political Groups Nationality</u>	<u>Committees</u>
Mr Werner LANGEN <i>Chairman</i>	EPP Germany	Economic and Monetary Affairs
Mr Robert GOEBBELS <i>Vice-Chair</i>	S&D Luxembourg	Industry, Research and Energy
Mr Ivo BELET <i>Vice-Chair</i>	EPP Belgium	Industry, Research and Energy
Ms Barbara LOCHBIHLER	Greens/ALE Germany	Human Rights
Mr Francesco Enrico SPERONI	EFD Italy	Legal Affairs
Ms Jean LAMBERT	Greens/ALE UK	Employment and Social Affairs
Mr Wolf KLINZ	ALDE Germany	Economic and Monetary Affairs
Ms Barbara WEILER	S&D Germany	Internal Market and Consumer Protection
Ms Julie GIRLING	ECR UK	Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
Mr Csaba SÓGOR	EPP Romania	Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
Mr Marian-Jean MARINESCU	EPP Romania	Transport and Tourism

Secretariat

Mr Walter MASUR, Head of Secretariat
Mr Tim BODEN, Administrator
Ms Claudia SCHWENDENWEIN, Assistant

Political Groups

Mr Markus ARENS, Political Advisor EPP

Interpreters (DE)

Ms Annette STACHOWSKI (team leader)
Ms Ute PAUNA

DG COMMUNICATIONS - AUDIO VISUAL PRODUCER

Ms Maria Elena KURZE