

Statement by the Leader of Myanmar Delegation,
Hon. Dr. Shwe Pon, Member of Pyithu Hluttaw (House of Representatives),
Member of the Joint IPU Committee,
the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Assembly) at the 140th IPU Assembly
(6-10, April 2019)

Madam President,

Mr. Secretary General,

Honorable Speakers and Parliamentarians,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Myanmar Parliament, I am very honoured to attend the 140th IPU Assembly under your excellent leadership. Taking this opportunity, we would like to express our appreciation to the Shura Council of the State of Qatar for hosting this Assembly and the hospitality extended to our delegation during the visit to your modern city of Doha.

The theme “Parliaments as platforms to enhance education for peace, security and the rule of law” chosen for this year’s general debate is very relevant to the present situation of our world.

We all agree that education plays a central role in strengthening our communities, fostering lasting peace, expanding economic development and building national unity.

Accordingly, the Myanmar Parliament has fully endorsed the implementation of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) over the period 2016-2021, by the Government of Myanmar. Since 2016, the budget allocation for the education sector has been significantly increased every fiscal year.

The NESP is a comprehensive, widely-owned and evidence- based roadmap intended to reform the entire education sector. As a developing country, the international cooperation is of importance to implement the national plans. To successfully improve the education outcomes to be in line with the country’s democratic federal system, the European Union’s US\$252 million programme (2019-2022) was launched last month. The programme will assist the NESP focusing on equal access to better quality secondary education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and public finance management. In addition, EU will invest US\$ 23 million for strengthening the existing ethnic education systems and build their capacity for policy advocacy on education in the peace process.

As you all are aware that under the 2008 Constitution, Myanmar has shifted to a democratic governance system. The Union Parliament with two houses and 14 State/Region Parliaments, as a foundation for a decentralized governance system, was established in 2011. In 2015, a second multi-party election was successfully conducted and the term of the second session of the Parliament is in its fourth year.

As a young parliament, capacity building programmes for the Union Parliament and sub-national Parliaments have been undertaken with the help of the development partners. The UNDP/ IPU programme, which started in 2013, have benefitted MPs and staff of the Parliaments for better performance of their role in realizing democracy in the country. The programmes in the Hluttaw Learning Centre should be extended in the areas which are essential to achieve our aim to become a democratic federal Union and to be a platform to enhance education for peace, security and the rule of law through the Constituencies.

In Myanmar society, education is traditionally valued as a key determinant for social mobility and it is widely recognized as a critical building block for nation building, national unity and sustainable development. Furthermore, education and poverty alleviation have been identified as two key drivers to support the democratic and peace-building process and to achieve the national goal of Myanmar becoming an upper-middle income country by 2030. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that peace, security and the rule of law in the country must be maintained for a conducive environment for education.

There are a number of MPs, who have raised questions regarding school buildings, children with special care, early childhood care programmes, curriculum, teachers training and examination systems in both houses.

A significant percentage of students have access to basic education through monastic, private, community and other types of schools, access to alternative education for out-of-school children, a Summer Basic Literacy Program (SBLP) for adults and technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Education Programmes for children with mental or physical disabilities, children in poverty and in remote areas have been developed.

A watershed moment for education sector reform in Myanmar was the approval by Parliament of a National Education Law (NEL) in September 2014 and its Amendment in 2015. The laws provide an excellent national framework for the implementation of a wide range of complementary reforms across the national education system. The reform

includes recognition of the right of all citizens to free, compulsory education at the primary level; establishment of a standards-based education Quality Assurance System; expansion of the basic education system to 13 years; support for the learning of nationalities' languages and culture; and greater decentralization within the education system. Myanmar is now fully aligned with ASEAN members in terms of the number of years of schooling under basic education.

In 2015, the Ministry of Education began working on a Private Education Law and Bills on Technical and Vocational Education; Private Education; and Basic Education are under consideration of the Parliament.

The Union Parliament has also performed oversight responsibilities by forming two education promotion committees in both houses. There are public hearings on Basic Education Reform, thereby upgrading the morals of educated citizens who maintain peace and security, and abide by the laws passed by the parliament. The two committees held the Seminar on Basic Education in December 2018 with all the stakeholders including the Ministry, Representatives of the State/ Region Parliaments and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) in Nay Pyi Taw.

Having an opportunity to participate in this general debate, we have been enlightened by our IPU colleagues' good practices and innovations in their country's education models which we will share with the relevant stakeholders for education reforms in Myanmar.

Thank you.