

MYANMAR FORUM 2016
Friday, 20 May 2016, Marina Mandarin, Singapore

Opening Remarks by Mr. Tan Chin Tiong
Director, ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute

U Ko Ko Gyi
Distinguished Speaker for the Forum,

Professor Linda Lim
Professor of Strategy at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests and Panellists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. We are at the beginning of a new chapter in Myanmar's transition. A civilian administration led by the National League for Democracy (NLD) last month has been installed. This is a time of new beginnings, directions, opportunities and challenges for the people of Myanmar. Today, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute is pleased to partner with the University of Michigan to organise the Myanmar Forum 2016.
2. This Forum's discussions focus on the evolving political, socio-economic and business landscapes in Myanmar. Emerging from 25 years of authoritarian rule, Myanmar's transition is complex and filled with uncertainties from unresolved legacy issues. Externally, a slowing down of the Chinese economy and changes in the global strategic environment for MNCs means less incentive to outsource to emerging economies such as Myanmar.
3. With the NLD administration's policy directions still taking shape, this Forum provides an opportune moment to assess the political, economic and social changes in the country, what lies ahead for Myanmar and its reform trajectory and their implications for Myanmar citizens, the country's ASEAN neighbours and its external relations.
4. The policy experts, academicians, and practitioners speaking today have witnessed and analysed Myanmar's fast-moving changes, and can help us to better understand the implications and effects of these changes. We look forward to listening to their assessments, and their candid discussions of the realities of Myanmar's continued opening. The interactive nature of each panel session also recognises the growing body of knowledge and experience

on Myanmar among the policy, business and academic communities present today.

5. The highlight of today's Forum is a conversation with our Distinguished Speaker U Ko Ko Gyi, General Secretary of the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society. The 88 Generation has a unique role in Myanmar's transition. As the name connotes, their activism as university students in 1988 was a foretaste of change that led the country inexorably down the path to where Myanmar finds itself today. The long years of imprisonment and harassment that student leaders such as U Ko Ko Gyi have experienced testify to the sacrifice made by his generation who gave up their opportunities in life to express the aspirations of the Burmese people. The 88 Generation continues this role in Myanmar today, through its work in providing a vehicle to promote peace and reconciliation. U Ko Ko Gyi's perspective on the challenges and prospects that lie ahead offers an alternative insight into the way forward for Myanmar.

6. Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I wish to express my sincere thanks to Professor Linda Lim and her colleagues from the University of Michigan for their advice and suggestions for this Forum. The University of Michigan's Stephen M. Ross School of Business has also provided generous support as a sponsor of the Forum. I also wish to acknowledge the role of ISEAS Fellows, Dr Hui Yew Foong, Dr Michael Montesano and Moe Thuzar in coordinating with University of Michigan to make this Forum possible. Finally, I wish to extend my deep appreciation to all attendees of the Myanmar Forum 2016.

7. And now, I would like to hand over the floor to Professor Linda Lim. Professor Lim, please.

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