

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

November 13, 2014

Remarks by President Obama After Bilateral Meeting with President Thein Sein of Burma

Presidential Palace
Naypyitaw, Burma

10:05 P.M. MMT

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, I want to thank once again President Thein Sein for welcoming us, not only for the excellent arrangements that were made for the EAS and the U.S. ASEAN Summit, but also the opportunity to exchange ideas face-to-face.

In part because of President Sein's leadership, the democratization process in Myanmar is real and we can point to specific changes that are making the difference. Domestically, we've seen political prisoners that have been released. We have seen an effort to end the practice of children being recruited into the army. There is a genuine prospect for a ceasefire between some of the armed groups that have been fighting in Myanmar for decades.

But in our discussions, we recognized that this process is still incomplete. So, specifically, we had the opportunity to discuss elections that are scheduled for next year and the need for those elections to be fair, inclusive, transparent, and that the constitutional amendment process that has begun needs to reflect the ability of all voices in Myanmar's society to participate.

We also discussed the specific situation in Rakhine State and the need to work towards a situation in which the Muslim minority there is protected and their rights are respected and they are able to fully enjoy the opportunities of this society.

And we discussed the opportunities for changes in the economy -- legal reforms, regulatory reforms -- that can allow the incredible natural resources and talents of Myanmar to fully access the opportunities of the world market.

And I thanked President Thein Sein for his efforts to end the arms trade with North Korea and to participate with us in building a strong nonproliferation regime here in Southeast Asia.

So we recognize that change is hard, and that it doesn't always move in a straight line, but I am optimistic about the possibilities of Myanmar. I am optimistic about the continuous strengthening of the bilateral ties between our two countries. And I committed to President Sein as well as his delegation and the people of Myanmar that all those who are sincere in pursuing reform will always have a strong ally in the United States of America. We look forward to working together.

END

10:13 P.M. MMT