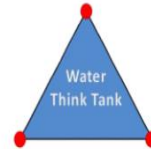




Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for  
Disaster Risk Reduction and Water



Ministry of Infrastructure and the  
Environment



**High Level Round Table on  
Water Security and the Sustainable Development Goals  
Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2016, Inya Lake Hotel, Yangon**

**Opening Speech and officiating the event**

**by**

**Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein**

**Yangon Regional Government**

**Good Morning. . .**

**~ Your Excellencies**

**~ Distinguished delegates from the United Nations, the World Bank, Global Water Partnership, Governments of Japan, Australia and the Netherlands,**

**~ Distinguished Participants,**

**~ Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, I am very glad to see such a distinguished high level international water community and our Myanmar water community here today. It is my great pleasure and honor to deliver an opening speech to officiate this very important High Level Round Table meeting.

Weather is much cooler today than the last few months. I hope it is more comfortable for you. Until last week we suffered from very high temperature due to **El Niño** effect. Climate change experts said **La Niña** is coming as well. In fact, these weather conditions impact on our water security and water related issues like floods, droughts and food security, urban water supply and urban drainage, etc. etc. If we do not take care about the water security and water management very seriously, the problems may accelerate and weaken our economic development, public health, and gross national wellbeing and

happiness. That is why I am grateful to the initiators, organizers, sponsors and participants of this High Level Round Table meeting for holding such an important event in Myanmar. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Ministry of Transport and Communications for hosting this important event and DWIR of MOTC, and ID of MOALI for supporting the event whole heartedly.

Water resources are abundant in Myanmar, however, we need to manage properly to get adequate and clean water, when and where it is needed. We also have to be aware of the fact that water is everybody's business – everybody in Myanmar has rights and responsibilities - water is our treasure, therefore we ought to conserve, sustain and use it properly and wisely. Over exploitation of groundwater should be restricted. Any action that may harm or pollute our water resources and water bodies should be restricted by law. Peoples who cause damages to rivers, lakes and reservoirs should be reminded of the Myanmar National Water Policy, Myanmar Environmental Law and other relevant existing laws before the completion of overarching National Water Law, which aims to be enacted this year.

*Another aspect I wish to point out is that sustainable water management should be integrated and holistic. It should grant peoples participation. All water users, water service providers, government officials, public private partnership implementers should work together from the planning stage throughout the implementation period until each task (or) activity (or) project ends.*

In September 2015 United Nations Member States adopted a landmark agreement on a new global sustainable agenda entitled: “**Transforming our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**”. This milestone provides a vision and a global framework for national strategies and policies that would eventually lead to the transformation on the road to 2030. In fact Myanmar National Water Policy that ensured the peoples participation guided by the Myanmar water professionals paves the way to meet those 2030 Global Sustainable Agenda. We witness the difference between Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The difference has been visible and it became more peoples-oriented. The practice of formulating the goals has changed from the top-down approach to bottom-up approach in water sharing, water allocation, water rights, water management, etc. In November 2015 Myanmar also has a radical change in electing people's government. Myanmar is practicing new governance principles, in style and in essence, since the beginning of April this year. Myanmar is more open to international collaboration and cooperation. Our approach is to learn from other's good practices and lessons learnt, adapt the good practices into our ground situation for implementation, and at the same time avoid the mistakes that others had been made during the long journey of development.

Just to give you a concrete example of the Yangon City flooding problem, I found out that the root causes are: -

- (1) Piece-wise (individual) development projects put together unsystematically without integrated urban (regional) planning;
- (2) Increase in population;
- (3) Industrial zones expansion without proper planning for water, energy and transport

requirements; and

(4) Lack of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

At present we are working on comprehensive greater Yangon Urban Development Plan for the long-term and to ease urban flooding, drinking water supply, public transportation including water transport, food safety, fire safety, housing, electricity and energy supply problems just to mention a few. Indeed all these problems originally rooted in lack of proper planning and lack of systems thinking.

Yangon city dwellers need three tier solutions. The first tier is to ease the problems with short-term solutions; the second is medium-term solutions to provide the smooth running of their day to day life and business activities, the third is a long-term solution that is sustainable and sufficient. We are working with the notion that we need to do systems thinking and start planning future developments by design. At the same time we carefully analyze each issue and problem to come up with short-term solutions, which in turn they may serve as building blocks for the long-term solutions. Therefore money, time and energy we spent for such short-term solutions will be good and early investments as we go along with medium-term and long-term solutions for the Yangon City as well as for Yangon region.

The sustainable development agenda for Yangon Region will be in line with the National Development Agenda at the Union level. I also believe that the Union level development agenda takes into account of the 2030 sustainable development agenda. As it stands now there are 17 SDGs. These 17 SDGs can be regarded as a framework for development cooperation. The first 16 SDGs define the expected substantive outcomes with targets. The last goal, SDG 17, is fully dedicated to partnership building that covers the issues like finance, technology, capacity-building, trade, systemic issues, including policy and institutional coherence, multi-stakeholder partnership and data and monitoring. Therefore it is most fitting that this High Level Round Table meeting is being organized by the far sighted international and national water professionals to help Myanmar advance in SDGs and integrated water resources management.

You have come from faraway lands to meet with us, to work together with us, to support us and to forge partnership with us. All these good intentions, good efforts and good deeds are highly appreciated. Words cannot equal our feeling of gratitude, joy and appreciation. Instead, I would like to reciprocate your friendship and cooperation and possible future partnership. I thank you all once again and wishing you a very pleasant and fruitful meeting.

**With those few words, I now officially open "The High Level Round Table meeting on Water Security and the Sustainable Development Goals!"**

**Thank You!**