

Video Message
delivered by
H.E. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor
on the occasion of the
Yangon Region Investment Forum 2019
Lotte Hotel, Yangon
10th of May 2019

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address you on this occasion of the 2019 Yangon Region Investment Forum.

Now in its second year, the Yangon Investment Forum, and indeed, each of the various State and Region investment fora now being held throughout the country, have been designed to allow domestic and international investors to gain first-hand insights into the immense investment potential which Yangon, and Myanmar, have to offer.

It is our aim to showcase the many major reform initiatives now underway, as well as new services now available to those who seek to invest here.

My thanks to the organizers of this year's Forum -- the Yangon Region Government and Yangon Region Investment Committee, the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, the Directorate of Investment and Company

Administration, and the Myanmar Investment Commission, who have all worked tirelessly to make this event a success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With a population of almost 6 million, most of whom are working age and capable of meeting labor demands, Yangon contributes almost one quarter of Myanmar's GDP.

Yangon also boasts a total of 29 industrial zones as well as the highly successful Thilawa Special Economic Zone.

A wide range of new and exciting investment projects are set to be implemented throughout the Yangon Region, details of which were shared with over 1,600 participants at the Invest Myanmar Summit held earlier this year.

As I am sure you will agree, Yangon is the heart of enterprising Myanmar, and your investments here will be welcomed enthusiastically.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just twelve months have passed since the inaugural Yangon Region Investment Forum was held, and yet, much has changed -- here at home, within our region, and at the global level.

Following strong growth throughout 2017 and into 2018, global economic activity has slowed down. Global growth is now forecast to reach just 2.9 percent in 2019.¹

Due to a broad-based decline in business confidence amidst policy uncertainty in many of the world's major economies, global conditions are expected to become even less supportive of emerging markets and developing economies such as Myanmar.

And yet East Asia and the Pacific remains amongst the world's fastest-growing developing regions.

For Myanmar, we seek to take full advantage of Asia's continued rise. Despite the multidimensional challenges that we face, I believe we have been successful in striking a careful balance between economic development and economic stability – with the result that we have successfully maintained relatively high rates of economic growth while inflation has been tamed to a large measure.

An expansionary fiscal policy is expected to boost further growth in Myanmar in the short term, while a range of recent structural reforms are expected to support growth in the medium term.

According to data from the Asian Development Bank, Myanmar continues to enjoy some of the highest growth rates

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/01/08/darkening-prospects-global-economy-to-slow-to-29-percent-in-2019-as-trade-investment-weakens>

in the region -- assisted in part by recent policy changes such as the adoption of the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan, liberalization of insurance sector, liberalization of wholesale and retail trade, implementation of the Myanmar Companies Law and large investments in infrastructure projects.

As Myanmar continues along a pathway toward economic progress, a long-term vision, well defined strategies and detailed action plans which have been clearly identified in the MSDP are required to transform our country's economy. We must also ensure these development approaches remain flexible and adaptive if we are to sustain progress during these volatile times.

To complement our MSDP, and to provide further strategic guidance, we have also launched a new Myanmar Investment Promotion Plan, which seeks to attain dynamic and harmonious growth – and to create a fair and prosperous society by promoting responsible and quality investment.

Trade and investment remain the two major drivers of Myanmar's economic development. Investment in our manufacturing sector represented 31 per cent of total investments in 2017/18 (compared to just 0.3 per cent in 2010/11). It's contribution to GDP reached 24 per cent in that same year.

As our manufacturing sector has expanded in correlation with what the IMF has termed ‘*impressive growth take-off and poverty reduction*’, the role of industrial parks has become increasingly important, opening up new opportunities for developers or investors or both.

Many successful initiatives are adopted in the Special Economic Zone to create a favorable investment environment. Once similar initiatives are successfully rolled out across the country, we expect further significant improvements in our investment climate.

It has also been noted that none of our enterprises, including industrial parks and Special Economic Zones already mentioned, will function effectively if the necessary supporting infrastructure such as power plants, water supply systems, waste water management systems, road and transport connectivity, etc... are not developed in an appropriate manner.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order to attract investment for such infrastructure necessities, Myanmar is developing our Project Bank which will eventually serve as a digital ‘one-stop-project-information-center’, where key information relating to strategic infrastructure projects planned for development are disseminated transparently that they might be implemented through transparent and competitive tender processes.

Once the development of the online database system is complete, access to key information will be available at the click of a button. This will enhance not only transparency but also predictability with respect to project identification and prioritization and will contribute towards creating a more secure investment enabling environment.

The Ministry of Planning and Finance and the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations have been leading the drive to streamline existing procedures and developing new SOPs aimed at simplifying and expediting the process of granting investment- and business-related approvals and permits.

In addition, the new Land Bank Notification is expected to come out soon and this will pave the way toward establishing a one-stop-land-information-center that will expedite the process of accessing land for our valued investors.

I am a strong believer in the power of collaboration to achieve Myanmar's development goals. While the public sector has a key role to play in establishing a strong policy, a sound legal, and regulatory framework, we must work together with the private sector to ensure that a responsible and sustainable business environment is maintained. The business community's investments, products, services and expertise are vital resources for Myanmar's economy and people.

In this regard, we are encouraging investors to consider public-private-partnership (PPP) mechanisms. The Project Bank Notification issued by the President's Office contains key information on how the government may support PPP projects, including through the offer of assistance that will make PPPs commercially viable through various blended financing mechanisms. We envisage that this will attract quality private investors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I urge you to see Myanmar as a country that has already broken free of international isolation, having turned a corner, actually many challenging corner and opened a door to a significantly better future for her people. We can offer you a people and a country eager for opportunities and willing to work for those opportunities.

I would like to encourage you to explore the investment opportunities available in the Yangon Region. Your support to Myanmar's economic development for a brighter future will be met with strong corporation on our part.

In conclusion, may I express my sincere appreciation to all for your commitment to supporting Myanmar's development. For

those who are thinking of investing in Myanmar, we warmly invite you to come and invest here, in Asia's final frontier economy. For those who are already investing, please be assured that we are committed to the creation of a more favorable, facilitative, predictable and friendly business climate for your businesses not only to grow, but to prosper.

Thank you and I hope you enjoy the rest of the activities organized for today.