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**OPENING ADDRESS BY
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**Consultative Workshop on the Development of the
Framework for Administrative Reforms**

Nay Pyi Taw, 23-24 May 2015

Your Excellency U Thein Sein, President of the Republic
of the Union of Myanmar,

Excellencies Union Ministers, State and Region Ministers

Esteemed Members of Parliament

Members of the diplomatic community,

Ladies and gentlemen

Mingalaba and good morning!

One year ago a joint Government-UNDP team was on a field trip in Shan State to map the capacities of local administrations and to take local communities feedback. At that time a young Shan woman approached us. She said: *"I don't want the government to just listen to me. I want them to take our opinions and make better policies for us."* The fact that she spoke to us so openly and forcefully speaks to the greatest achievement of the reform process taken under the leadership of His Excellency President U Thein Sein: the emerging of empowered Myanmar citizens. The issues that she brought up point to the citizens' rapidly rising expectations of their Government's performance and to their present and future needs.

Those needs are universal throughout the country, from the remote hills of Kachin State to the fishing villages of the Delta Region. All across, men, women, boys and girls of this diverse and beautiful country first and foremost want peace and development. With

peace and development, they want to be able to send their children to school to get a good education and to earn a bright future. They want their land rights to be upheld to guarantee improved livelihoods and welfare. They want better roads to connect them to a township center to feel even more being part of this great nation. And to get these, they want to see the public officials whom they trust, who will listen to their complaints, and who are empowered and able to take appropriate action.

As UNDP's experience around the globe shows, having civil servants in the right jobs, with the right skills, knowledge, to do the right thing, is the key to ensure that the citizens get what they need. And yet, competent civil servants alone will not be sufficient for people-centered service delivery, until their work is enabled by rules and procedures that allow taking actions in response to people's needs; and do so well, on time and on budget. And finally, neither people nor procedures will perform unless behind them stand responsive, properly structured and resourced government institutions. I note that the Consultative workshop will facilitate in-depth discussion of main components of most administrative reforms: people, procedures and institutions. Through searching and finding Myanmar's own solutions, and learning from global experiences, the workshop will help advance the Third Wave of Reforms led by the Government under the President's leadership.

Ladies and gentlemen:

Let us also remember that administrative reforms are not only about bureaucratic and procedural improvements. They are also, and most importantly, about who gets to take decisions; who has the resources; who has the authority. The reforms are not just a matter of improving people's daily lives: they are also about resolving contentious challenges of Myanmar's transition. When we talk about administrative reforms – especially decentralization – we are also talking about important future components of the peace process and political dialogue. Just as high expectations around the peace process might not be met without notable changes in the lives of the people, similarly forging dynamic governance institutions in all states and regions of the country will help raise the level of mutual trust among various ethnic groups. By promoting the administrative modernization the Government will not only accelerate the Third Wave of Reforms but also contribute to the comprehensive multi-dimensional agenda of the nation's rejuvenation, across the entire reform package.

In all countries where UNDP works, public administrative reforms are one of the most complex and difficult tasks of governance. Not only they are so closely interconnected with other aspects of nation-wide reforms, but also involve difficult political negotiations and require compromise. And they take time. The World Development Report of 2011 states that: "*Creating the*

legitimate institutions is slow. It takes a generation. Even the fastest transforming countries took between 15 and 30 years to raise performance to the level of functioning institutionalized state." This will be a long journey, but as the saying goes: "*If you want to go fast: go alone. If you want to go far: go together.*" Thanks to the remarkable leadership of the President, to hard work of the entire Government staff, and to resourcefulness of Myanmar people – like the Shan woman I mentioned earlier – this great nation will go far reforming its administrative systems. We in UNDP are ready to accompany you all the way on this long but exciting journey, helping to connect Myanmar's reforms with international best practices and lessons from other countries.

Wish you most productive deliberations ahead.

Kye Zu Ti Ba De