



**OPENING SPEECH OF GENERAL SAW MUTU SAE POE, CHAIRMAN OF
THE KNU & CONFERENCE PRESIDUM, AT THE ETHNIC ARMED
ORGANISATIONS CONFERENCE LAW KHEE LAR, KAWTHOOLEI ON 20
JANUARY 2014**

Dear respectable leaders of armed organisations, representatives of the conference, leaders and representatives from the respective organisations and the representatives who are attending as observers.

In such a time of this auspicious occasion, I would like to wish you bountiful blessings and peace of mind. At the same time, on behalf of the Karen National Union, I would like to warmly welcome you all at this Law Khee Lar Conference.

Today, we the senior leaders of our ethnic armed organisations, come here at Law Khee Lar Conference, with the purpose of political discussions and establishing a mechanism that will be included in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, for the troops of the parties to follow and avoid the conflict, as the first important step of constructing genuine peace in our country. Additionally, we are going to discuss among the ethnic armed organisations establishing peace through a common agreement. These agreements are the preparation steps that need to be included in the future constitution through this vital amendment.

In order to get these amendments, we need to mutually exchange ideas, perspectives and carefully listen to one another and seriously present our common interests. Conference, metaphorically speaking, is like a school class

learning political science together. I would like to urge you all, by regarding ourselves as students learning political science related to peace, to share freely our experiences and points of views, learn the lessons from our diversities, and in this way, accumulate different opinions and thus, promote mutual understanding and common ground. These common agreements and approvals will be brought to the negotiations between the Union Peacemaking Work Committee (UPWC) and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) at the meeting in Pa-an.

These agreements that have been reached from the several times of negotiations in the peace process since 2011 until now, are vital to consistently carry on in the implementation.

Dear respectable leaders and representatives,

I would like to let you know and highlight some probable outcomes that can bring a good result of the Nationwide Ceasefire Accord.

1. Attaining a guarantee for political dialogue.
2. Reaffirming the agreements already signed with each respective ethnic armed organisation.
3. A bilateral high implementation committee and wider participation.

Dear respectable leaders and representatives,

Speed up the implementation and transparent changes for the people, and I would like to encourage you to use this time and opportunity effectively.

The reasons are:

1. One of the most needed basic fact for Burma's sixty million population and the ethnic nationalities, those who struggled along with the armed struggle for national equality and self determination, is the establishment of a developed country through political stability that will come from the negotiation table, by looking for an armed struggle solution, with the creation of all inclusiveness.
2. Now is the time that the political tide is high to attain Ethnic rights, self-determination and common interest.

I would like to include my own personal experience not only as the KNU Chairman, but also as a former ordinary soldier since the Karen revolution began. I am the one who is ceaselessly striving for the establishment of a Federal Union, self-determination and national equality for over 60 years. In the process of seeking political solutions for the demand of ethnic rights, no solution

has been found under the successive regimes, except one sided demands “to exchange arms for peace and enter into the legal-fold”.

Against this situation, since 2011 President U Thein Sein who leads the Burma/Myanmar government started talking about the establishing of peace on the basis of equality, freedom and justice, to peacefully negotiate as a way of problem solving for a political solution and the establishment of a future federal union through a practical approach. Although there have been some changes because of the negotiations, we cannot say that these are adequate measures but they are rightful initial changes.

Today is also an important day for political discussion and political process that will be brought by the ethnic nationalities, to strengthen the initial development and the successive steps for the future.

Problem solving by violence means damage to the nation and the people. It is an undesirable inheritance for our future generations. In order to leave a peaceful heritage behind and to ensure success, the Karen Nation Union’s great leader, Saw Ba U Gyi, instructed that “we shall decide our own political destiny” and the second and third points of successfulness in obtaining our political goals are:

1. By voluntary gift (from the opposition) and
2. By force of circumstances: these are the conditions that could bring about national and political success (goals).

On the basis of these two points, to be stronger, I would like to highlight some basic facts that can be overcome with courage, while considering the initial changes of Burma’s actual political situation and the sensitivity.

- Don't be afraid that you will make mistakes. Bravely, sign the documents and make history, including the mechanisms and agreements to establish successful peace, in front of different witnesses and sectors.
- Support the nascent changes to be broad and meaningful changes; the ethnic armies have to be obedient to the incisive political leaderships during the political negotiations.
- We have to see ourselves as learners learning political science and therefore, “freely discussing our better future without any restriction and hindrance”.
- Avoid the attitude of unaccountability and irresponsibility, and keep on with good will. Don't try to rejuvenate the awful history that tries to resolve conflict by means of violence.

- By means of exchanging ideas and perceptions and through constructive engagement and negotiation, we will be able to build up trust. Therefore, create a good line of communication, and in this way we will build trust.
- Strongly seize and develop this opportunity of establishing the common interests of the ethnic nationalities, use all your strength and energy while the political tide is high.
- Establish ethnic unity by practical inclusiveness with the participation of women and youth, through majority agreement and cooperation, within our restricted conditions.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage you all to discuss openly and seriously the draft of the Nationwide Ceasefire document that was prepared by the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), formed by the Ethnic Armed Organisations at the Laiza Conference, irreversibly with firm commitment to discuss the-all-inclusive historic nationwide ceasefire and practically, in line with the present realities, of the future Federal Union for peace.

Note: General Mutu Sae Poe, Chairman of the KNU and Presidium of the Ethnic Armed Organisations Conference, opening speech. This opening speech was given on the first day of the Ethnic Armed Organisations Conference to 17 Armed Organisations representatives, including observers and special invitees totaling above 160 people. The conference was from 20-25th January 2014 and resulted in the approval of the nationwide ceasefire preparation-working document.