



EUROPEAN UNION

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**Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton
following her meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,
Yangon, Burma/Myanmar, 28 April 2012.**

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It is a great privilege and honour to be here. I come because the European Union, the 27 countries I represent, wanted me to be here to send two or three key messages.

First of all our message of support for the changes that are taking place and recognition of the prominent role that you, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, have played in getting us to this point. I just met with you a group of representatives of National League of Democracy, among them young campaigners, who are working with you to help improve the lives of everyone in this country.

Secondly, to make sure that it is understood we will continue to support the changes that are taking place and the people of this country through the development work we can offer in support. With our programmes - we have 150 million euro available for 2012-2013 - we will for example focus on rural communities and helping agriculture, which is a huge part of your economy. You will find a lot of potential in the cities, but rural communities especially need our assistance. We offer support for the long term, and it's something I believe in strongly. Short term initiatives are very significant, but it's the long term development programmes that really make the difference.

And thirdly, to open an EU office, against the backdrop that we have suspended the sanctions in recognition of the progress made. We know changes take time, they need to be well embedded and they need to be guaranteed so that people can feel confident in their own future. And we hope that we can work alongside you to help that be a lasting achievement.

P R E S S

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I will say to the president that we welcome the way he is moving forward and the way in which he has been a strong advocate of the changes that are taking place, and urge him to do more.

We look to the future and our role is to be as supportive as we possibly can through the work that we do in order that this country can grow and develop in a way that so many people would like to see.

One of the key things for this country is to make sure that there is focus on capacity building. I think it's absolutely wonderful that people are coming here to offer support and recognise the changes. But it will be important to make sure that there is the administration, that the capacity exists to be able to deal with the resources in the country. That is partly why we are opening the office here, because then we can channel our support through our team to particularly the rural communities, to make sure that the money reaches the people and also help build the capacity.

You are in a process - a process of change - and I hope we will see all the elements coming into place and that this will be an irreversible process. On that journey many things will need to be done, many things will need to be worked out, practical ways the country can go forward, the political process that needs to be addressed. All these things have to be done and some of them will be more difficult than others. The main thing is that the journey has begun and we are here to help support you in this journey, so it can't go backwards.
