

Joint Statement by President Obama, President Thein Sein of Burma, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt of Denmark, and the International Labour Organization
November 14, 2014

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the United States of America, Japan, Denmark and the International Labour Organization (ILO) today are jointly launching a new *Initiative to Promote Fundamental Labor Rights and Practices in Myanmar*. The *Initiative* is designed to: 1) improve Myanmar's system of labor administration through a multi-year labor law reform and capacity building plan (labor reform plan); and 2) foster strong relations among businesses, workers, civil society organizations, and the Government of Myanmar through a stakeholder consultative mechanism. The *Initiative* is intended to build upon Myanmar's existing labor reform efforts, including ongoing legislative reform activities supported by the ILO. To that end, the labor reform plan developed under this *Initiative* is intended to serve as a blueprint to prioritize legal changes, coordinate donor assistance, and strengthen government capacity to implement those reforms in close cooperation with civil society representatives. The stakeholder consultative mechanism is intended to provide a forum for business, labor, and other civil society representatives to provide guidance on the development of the labor reform plan to the government and to foster constructive relationships among them.

As an initial step in the development of the *Initiative*, the Government of Myanmar established the Technical Committee Cluster on Labor Law Reform and Institutional Capacity Building ("Labor Law Reform Cluster") in October 2014 under the Employment Opportunities Sector Working Group (EOSWG). The EOSWG is one of 15 Sector Working Groups established by the Government of Myanmar under the Nay Pyi Taw Accord for Effective Development Cooperation. This Labor Law Reform Cluster is intended to provide donor

partners, stakeholders, and the ILO a forum to support the Government of Myanmar and civil society in the development of the labor reform plan. To support this process, the United States is providing initial funding to the ILO for a labor law expert to advise the government on its reform efforts. The *Initiative* participants also envision organizing a broad stakeholder forum in Myanmar in early 2015 to provide input on the development of the labor reform plan.

The participating governments and the ILO welcome the engagement of other interested governments, stakeholders, and institutions in support of this *Initiative*. Myanmar is at a pivotal stage of its political and economic development, and the country's future depends on its ability to grow its economy, create decent work, and re-integrate into the global economy. Governments and stakeholders have a unique opportunity to promote lasting positive development in Myanmar by working together to improve an important component of its investment environment—its labor regime. The *Initiative* is designed to support the government and stakeholders in promoting international labor standards and responsible business practices, helping to make Myanmar an attractive sourcing and investment destination, protecting Myanmar's workers and supporting its businesses, and advancing Myanmar's overall sustainable growth and development.

NOTE: The joint statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 13, but due to the 1½-hour time difference between Washington, DC, and Rangoon, Burma, it carries a release date of November 14. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.