

**Statement by the Leader of Myanmar Delegation,**

**Prof. Than Win, Chairperson of the IPU Committee of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Chairperson of International Relations Committee of the Amyotha Hluttaw, at the 139th IPU Assembly**

**General debate on “*Parliamentary leadership in promoting peace and development in the age of innovation and technological change*”**

**16-10-18**

Madam President

Hon. Speakers and Representatives

Ladies and Gentlemen,

*“Parliamentary leadership in promoting peace and development in the age of innovation and technological change”* is the theme chosen for this year’s general debate. Technological changes and innovations largely contributes to the economic and social development of a country. As Myanmar is a developing country which has changed to democracy system of government only seven years back, there are many areas that needs change for its development. Myanmar needs to rely on innovation and technology for its development rather than relying on the low cost labor.

Innovation is about extracting value from existing, traditional or emerging technologies to develop new services and business models. As a developing country, innovation can be incremental by adopting foreign technology. Innovation ideas will focus not necessarily on high tech areas but rather on areas like agriculture and livestock breeding, small and medium enterprises and on tourism. There are now quite a number of start ups on apps in areas of mobile banking, tour arrangements, education and taxi services in Myanmar.

Innovation depends on people: on their knowledge, creativity and skills.

Education system of Myanmar needs to emphasize on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) for the development of science and technology that will boost the economy. Better quality education ensures the people from low income group to take full advantage of ICTs. Low educational attainment and lack of quality and capacity of the educational sector at all levels (including vocational training) can hold back innovation. A better educated workforce is critical to move up the global value chain, and to ensure a more inclusive economic and social progress.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) offer many opportunities for innovation. It helps greatly for the dissemination of knowledge and the uptake of technology. ICTs drastically reduce the cost of accessing or diffusing information. ICTs are a key channel for the transfer of ideas as they extend to remote locations and previously marginalized people. They can be essential for enabling to start off innovation processes as new ideas are disseminated more widely and put to new uses. In Myanmar there is a huge increment in the number of mobile phones up to 110% in recent years and internet usage has grown by 97%, with 85% of the internet use on smart phones. This enormous growth of mobile phone and internet usage will be a big asset for innovations.

As for a developing country, basic infrastructure such as electricity, roads and transportation have to be improved and maintained for the proper functioning of ICTs and innovative businesses. For the technology and innovations to blossom in a developing country, the role of investors and dependable banking systems are essential.

Our parliament should initiate, advice and monitor the Innovation policies for the country.

Thank you for your attention.