

Welcoming Remarks by H.E. U Linn Myaing
at the Tourism Promotion Reception

(Washington D.C., June 29, 2002)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for all of us at the Embassy to have you here this evening. We should like to extend to you our warmest welcome.

We are most delighted, not only because we have the chance to meet and get acquainted with people who have a genuine interest in our country, our people, and our culture, but also because we have the opportunity to introduce to you a sample of Myanmar culture as well as Myanmar cuisine.

I should like to express our deep appreciation to Global Spectrum and VIP Travels, for sponsoring this reception. Our thanks also go to the Myanmar Youth Association or MYA as we call them, for joining us and providing a couple of items in this evening's short cultural event, which I am sure you will all enjoy.

Myanmar has a lot to offer the international traveler. To name some of the unique and unspoiled tourist destinations in the country, we have:

- Yangon, the capital city, with its famous Shwedagon Pagoda, the beginnings of which are believed to have been built 2,500 years ago, during the lifetime of the Buddha.
- Mandalay, the cultural centre of Myanmar and the last seat of the Myanmar kings.
- Bagan, the 11th century capital of Myanmar which flourished for over 1,200 years, and where more than 6000 pagodas and temples remain.
- The ancient city of Mrauk-Oo, founded in 1430 AD, and thrived as the capital of Rakhine for 355 years.
- The Amazing Kyaikhtiyo Cedi, the Golden Rock Pagoda in the Mon State, built on a precarious huge rocking stone.
- Inlay Lake on the Shan Plateau with its world-renowned leg rowers.
- Padalin Caves, also in the Shan State, where one can study stone age wall paintings.
- The snow-capped Mt. Hkakaborazi in the Kachin State, whose 19,300 foot peak makes it the highest in Southeast Asia.
- The unspoiled sandy beaches of Ngapali, known as the Naples of the

East.

- Mount Popa, an extinct volcano nearly 5000 feet in height and believed to be the abode of many spirits.
- The Lampi Marine national Park in the South where one can explore four ecosystems within five kilometers.

Although it was not too long ago that the country was really opened to foreign visitors, tourism related infrastructures are already in place at these destinations and many others. Visitors to Myanmar can enjoy all the sites in complete safety and comfort. In fact, Myanmar is not only one of the safest but is also among the most culturally rich tourist destinations in the world.

More and more tourists are visiting Myanmar and in the year 2000, nearly 13,000 American tourists visited the country. There continues to be an upward trend in numbers. The international travelers who visit Myanmar contribute to the development of the country and the people. They also find out for themselves what the country is really like, instead of being misled by the negative portrayals frequently featured in the media by some irresponsible sources and by those who have their own political agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To those of you who are planning to visit Myanmar during this year, I should like to assure you that you will truly enjoy the serene beauty of the country and that the charm and sincerity of the Myanmar people will remain in your hearts for a long time. After all, it is not without reason that Myanmar is known as the "Golden Land". I wish you a pleasant and enjoyable trip.

Thank you.

I would now like to invite my wife to give you a short presentation on some aspects of Myanmar culture.