

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's acceptance speech for LexisNexis Rule of Law Award

**The LexisNexis Inaugural Rule of Law Awards is presented to individuals who have made significant contributions to advancing the rule of law. This recent award was held in conjunction to the LexisNexis - Atlantic Council Rule of Law NOW event held on 19 September 2013 at New York City.*

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a great honour for me to receive the inaugural LexisNexis Rule of Law award and I send my apologies that I am not able to join you in person. In my role chairing Burma's Parliamentary Committee on Rule of Law I have had many opportunities to reflect on the meaning and importance of rule of law. As is stated in the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

"... it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law..."

While the protection of human rights is a subject close to my heart and a very important one, the need for rule of law goes much broader than that. By way of example, without rule of law Burma will not attract the level and quality of foreign investment required to drive her development. As I have said previously, with the right kind of institutions and with rule of law Burma could progress very quickly. When I talk of rule of law, I refer not only to decisions in Court but also to the daily decisions of officials, who interpret and apply the law.

Sadly, over the last 5 decades rule of law has been terribly eroded in Burma. There are numerous accounts of Judges who have been ordered how to rule and pressured in other ways, of Judges with no sufficient access to the written laws and of Court rooms with few or any of the facilities required for them to operate effectively. It is hardly surprising that Judges have failed to produce well reasoned judgments. This lack of updated case law to follow has led some to question whether our Common Law system, which was once so strong and respected, really is a Common Law system anymore.

We are working hard with help from many sources to rebuild rule of law in Burma. We have run workshops for Judges, lawyers, Parliamentarians and Parliamentary staff. We have welcomed foreign legal experts to observe and advise. We have encouraged a nascent bar association to become a strong and independent body. We are making progress but we have a long way to go. We need to be honest with ourselves about the scale of what is required. I estimate that between 5,000 and 10,000 legal professionals in Burma need upgrading. Most importantly we need to revisit and revise our Constitution so that we are building on a strong foundation and can achieve genuine democracy and success for the long-term.

As we progress, we welcome prompt and constructive feedback from the international community. In the meantime, I thank all of you, including LexisNexis, for your goodwill and assistance.

Aung San Suu Kyi
September 2013

For more information, visit <http://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/about-us/media/press-release.page?id=1379530925264465&y=2013> or catch the latest on LexisNexis' Rule of Law initiatives via Twitter at **#LN4ROL**