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## **President Emeritus of the European Council Herman van Rompuy gives the first EuroCham Lecture in Mandalay**

- **EuroCham Myanmar hosts its first EuroCham Lecture on 21 October at the Mandalay Hill Resort Hotel with 150 guests**
- **President Emeritus delivers speech on the European Union and relations to Myanmar**
- **Ministers, leaders and members of the Mandalay Regional Parliament, NLD (Mandalay) and MRCCI meet to discuss business opportunities in Mandalay region with EU Ambassadors and European private sector representatives**

The European Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar (EuroCham) held its first *EuroCham Lecture* signature event in Mandalay and welcomed as VIP speaker **His Excellency Count van Rompuy, President Emeritus of the European Council** (2009-2014), former Prime Minister of Belgium (2008-2009) and President of the European Policy Centre for an exclusive reception in Mandalay. Despite this being his first visit to Myanmar, he already met with State Counsellor Aung San Su Kyi, former president Thein Sein and others in the past.

### **EuroCham Lecture VIP Reception, 21 October 2017**

The EuroCham Lecture VIP Reception hosted by EuroCham Myanmar on 21 October was the first of its kind to be held in Mandalay. With the event EuroCham Myanmar wanted to create an occasion to invite high-level VIPs to share their economic and political vision for Europe and its future role in the fast-changing global landscape with regards to Asia.

The event was held in Mandalay to underline the fast economic development all over Myanmar – with Mandalay being the second-most promising investment destination for European businesses in Myanmar.

The speakers highlighted the opportunities for investment in Myanmar and the role of European investors as responsible partners for sustainable investment and development.

The reception also welcomed distinguished guests, including the **EU Ambassador to Myanmar Kristian Schmidt**, the **Chief Minister of Mandalay Region Zaw Myint Maung** and high-level government officials of various ministries, the Mandalay Regional Parliament, chairmen and Secretaries of departments within the Mandalay Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MRCCI), as well as diplomats of the European Union, representatives of European companies, civil society and media.



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## Speakers

The event was opened by **EuroCham Chairman David Levrat**. He elaborated on EuroCham's role as the voice of European business in Myanmar and underlined the importance of the event as the starting point for further activities and investments in the coming years. EuroCham sees increased interest from European companies in Mandalay and considers opening a chapter in the city. The Chairman also stressed how peace and development in Myanmar can benefit from responsible business practices of European investors.

The first welcome speech was delivered by **H.E. Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, Chief Minister of Mandalay**. He introduced Mandalay Region as a prime destination for tourists and logistic hub for investors. Its strategic geographic location, natural resources and agricultural production would make Mandalay Myanmar's second most promising economic hub. The Chief Minister elaborated on two master development plans – industrial planning and information technology – to further the economic development of the region. In that respect, he welcomed European companies to invest in compliance with regional investment laws and standards.

The Chief Minister was followed by the new **Ambassador of the European Union to Myanmar, H.E. Mr. Kristian Schmidt**. He introduced H.E. Herman van Rompuy by recognizing his leadership from 2009 to 2014 during Europe's recovery after the financial crisis. Also, the EU Ambassador mentioned two pillars the EU is built upon – sound policies and human rights. Ambassador Schmidt pointed to the challenges Myanmar is facing with regards to human rights, the peace process and the crisis in Rakhine State, all constituting the biggest threats to Myanmar's future. "If the political challenges can be addressed, the economic opportunities between Myanmar and the European Union are great," said the EU Ambassador. "The economies of Myanmar and the EU complement and supplement each other: Myanmar has what the EU needs, and the EU has what Myanmar needs." He described Europe as both a partner to provide technology, know-how and machinery, and a friend providing support in times of distress and tension. While eluding to how trade between the EU and Myanmar increased significantly since the lifting of the sanctions in 2013, the Ambassador encouraged the Mandalay government to continue expanding beneficial partnerships with European investors to ensure sustainable economic development.

**H.E. Count Herman van Rompuy, President Emeritus of the European Council** opened his keynote address by elaborating on the three fundamental principles the European Union was built upon – peace, democracy and prosperity. After alluding to the hardships the European continent faced during the second world war, he acknowledged that lasting peace could only be built through reconciliation and creating economic interdependence in a pragmatic stepwise approach. His Excellency later continued by defining nationalism as the cause of war – which ultimately steered the European community for a union of nations, rather than a divided continent. What started as six countries and 250 million people, later promulgated into half a billion spanning across twenty-eight countries, all of which were respected culturally and linguistically – "no majority, no minorities, everyone is equal".

From that experience Europeans would be looking with unease at the rise of populism, as a variant of nationalism. His Excellency stated it would take courage and positive language from leaders to counter this development.



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As the former Prime Minister of Belgium carried on to his second principal by describing Myanmar as a young democracy, he assured that the once immature European democracies also started out with many challenges to face. However, in a concerted effort to anchor political democracy, and prevent the reappearance of dictatorships, a system of values was established – gender equality, fundamental freedoms, non-discrimination and tolerance of religions. The keynote speaker concluded by attributing the success of the European Union to its shared values.

In terms of prosperity, His Excellency deemed the improvement of living standards increased double-fold during the 1950's as a result of the presence of a large, single market in Europe. He reasoned that an openness to financial activities and investment practices would lead to economic development in Myanmar and described them as key to the country's future. Only through trade and globalization could economic development be achieved.

The speaker continued that today in the midst of a wave of protectionism, Europe would move forward with free trade – signing free trade agreements and letting countries like Myanmar benefit from and access the European market under the Everything-But-Arms Scheme (EBA).

His Excellency further elaborated on Europe taking more initiative in security, continuously improving social security and solidarity, and allowing controlled and needed immigration. Also, he described the European Union as the worldwide biggest provider of development and humanitarian aid, and as a global player through trade policy, climate protection and more.

### **Background information on Herman van Rompuy**

Herman van Rompuy was elected as the first permanent president of the European Council in 2009. He commenced his duties when the Lisbon Treaty came into force in December 2009. After completing his first term, he served his second term from 2012 to 2014 and is now active as professor and President of the European Policy Centre.

When he was first elected, Herman van Rompuy was active as Prime Minister of Belgium. Before he took office, he had served in Belgium as Speaker of the House of Representatives (2007-2008) and in various other government positions, among which were Minister of State (2004), Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Budget (1993-1999). Throughout his career he has held various responsibilities within his party and the Belgium Parliament, being active as Senator (1988-1995) and Member of Parliament (1995-2009).

Herman van Rompuy obtained a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and a Master's degree in Applied Economics from the University KU Leuven.

### **Background information on EuroCham Myanmar**

EuroCham serves as the voice of European business in Myanmar. Its main mission is to significantly increase the presence of European companies in the country and to facilitate market access particularly for European SMEs – by advocating for member interests with the government and organisations in Myanmar, the ASEAN region and the EU.



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With a strong, growing network of partners, EuroCham offers on-the-ground assistance for European businesses interested in commercial endeavours in Myanmar, whether in the form of advocacy, business services, research or networking.

Myanmar currently finds itself at a political and economic crossroads. After opening up to the world in 2011 and holding its first credible elections for decades in 2015, interest within the European business community in the many underdeveloped economic sectors in the country is on the rise. Now that Myanmar is re-entering the global community, there is no better time and opportunity for the European business community – and particularly EU SMEs – to invest in one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

#### **Material:**

#### **Q.1: Mr. Filip Lauwerysen, Executive Director, The European Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar (EuroCham)**

*“The event has proven to be a great occasion for EuroCham and its members to meet with the government and industry leaders of Mandalay.”*

#### **Q.2: Mr. David Levrat, Chairmen of the Board of EuroCham Directors**

*“EuroCham position is very clear: we are here to promote responsible business. And we believe that responsible business brings peace and prosperity.”*

#### **Q.3: H.E. Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, Chief Minister of Mandalay**

*“With Europe’s partnership and friendship, Myanmar, including Mandalay, wishes to develop and grow alongside its European partner.”*

*“Mandalay desires to, and will, create an environment of economic prosperity and capability, to which Europe is humbly invited.”*

#### **Q.4: H.E. Ambassador Kristian Schmidt, EU Ambassador to Myanmar**

*“If the political challenges can be addressed, the economic opportunities between Myanmar and the European Union are great,”*

*“The economies of Myanmar and the EU complement and supplement each other: Myanmar has what the EU needs, and the EU has what Myanmar needs.”*

#### **Q.5: H.E. Count Herman van Rompuy, President Emeritus of the European Council**

*“The European Union is just the opposite of Nationalism. Nationalism was the main reason for war.”*



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*“Trade and globalization are absolutely key to economic development.”*

*“Bring the people together, not only by cultural or political means, but also by spreading the results of economic growth amongst all.”*

- Photos of the EuroCham Lecture VIP reception attached

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