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**Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck
at the opening of the Delegate Office
of German Industry and Commerce
on 11 February 2014
in Yangon/Myanmar
during his official visit to the Republic of the
Union of Myanmar**

What an encouraging sign for Myanmar's transformation and for the new relations between our countries! I have the privilege of joining you to inaugurate the Delegate Office of German Industry and Commerce and later to celebrate the start of renovation work in the future residence of the Goethe-Institut.

And what a beautiful bridge to build – between business and culture! These elements have been closely linked since time immemorial. Both involve creativity, curiosity, the desire to make or represent something. How we will interact in the future, what our day-to-day lives, our cities, will be like, how we will communicate with one another, what impressions we will have of one another – all this has just as much to do with cultural as with economic developments. Yet above all, the two spheres – culture and business – depend on exchange and mutual enrichment – in both a material and an intellectual sense. Our companies don't merely sell their products, they also interact with the people here and want to work with them to create something new.

Of course there are challenges, particularly in Myanmar, where at the moment many things are happening or are being set in motion. We are observing many positive developments, and yet there is still so much to be done. If you ask entrepreneurs what they are waiting for to be able to invest in Myanmar, their answer will be: We need legal certainty, a reliable energy supply, sound infrastructure.

Even when conditions are favourable, the first steps taken in a faraway country always involve an element of risk. That is why it is so important that enterprises can be confident that they can rely on combined expertise and excellent advice at local level. I would like to thank the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry for its commitment to pushing forward the establishment of the Delegate Office of German Industry and Commerce. And I am delighted that you have found a director who has considerable experience with this country and the entire region. Dr Stärk, we wish you all the very best!

You will certainly not be complaining about having too little to do – I know that you have already been inundated with enquiries. And it is no coincidence that I have come to this country in the throes of transformation with a high-ranking business delegation. Myanmar offers tremendous opportunities for German business. The country is not only rich in mineral resources, but also has a wealth of young people who want to make the most of their country's move towards more openness.

The partners here have high expectations. We are all aware that the success of further reforms depends on the extent to which they can bring tangible improvements to the lives of as many citizens as possible. We Germans want to help bring this about. We will support you politically as your country continues to move along the path of positive transformation and seeks to become integrated in the international economic community.

Yesterday our two countries concluded important agreements which will pave the way for even closer cooperation. A viable solution has been found which now allows Germany to cancel debts owed by Myanmar of more than half a billion euros.

Our enterprises have a great deal to offer: highly innovative products and services, often in sectors of particular interest to your country such as infrastructure, industry and energy supply. Hardly anyone has so much experience in the area of resource-efficient production as our companies. What is more, they also bring with them a culture of social partnership. They know, to be successful in the long term, they cannot afford only to pursue their own interests but must also keep an eye on the needs of the local population. They must offer acceptable working

conditions and adequately reward the knowledge, commitment and ideas of their employees.

We Germans are proud to say that we are the first Europeans with a business representation in Myanmar, just as in July 2013 we were the first partners to sign a cultural agreement with your country. That is a very practical way of showing respect for the impressive changes your country is currently experiencing.

And this is an appeal to you all to get something going yourselves, too! Put your trust in one another, and let us all put our trust in Myanmar!