

Honorable Chairman,

Honorable Members of Parliament,

Dear Dr. Michael Cichon, dear Lou Tessier

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mingalabar to all of you!

1. Kindly let me extend my sincerest greetings to you. Please let me also express my deepest appreciation for the excellent partnership with the Hluttaw in organizing this event. I would also like to extend my thanks to the International Labour Office (ILO) in Myanmar to conduct this activity together with FES.
2. I feel very honored indeed to open today's important seminar on behalf of Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation (FES). We are particularly delighted about the presence of the Speaker of the Hluttaw. My name is Konstantin Bärwaldt, I am the resident representative of FES in Myanmar.
3. If I may I wish to start my words of welcome with a short comment about the importance of the topic: I believe – and evidence has shown that there is some truth in it – that social protection is not only good for the people and the prosperity of a country. Social protection is also about winning elections. What ever political party has the most convincing social policy program – this party holds a very good chance to win elections.
4. In our today's seminar our two distinguished experts, Dr Michael Cichon and Lou Tessier, will give you an introduction into the policies of social protection. No other experts would be equally qualified to do so:
5. Dr. Michael Cichon is an internationally leading advisor on social protection and the father of the so-called social protection floor. He has published widely on the topic. Michael currently serves as the President of the International Council of Social Welfare. We are

extremely delighted that he travelled all the way from Germany to Myanmar to be with us today.

6. Our second expert is Ms Lou Tessier. Lou Tessier is the Social Protection Coordinator at the “International Labour Office” in Yangon. In this capacity, she is responsible in supporting the Myanmar government to draft its social protection policies. As you probably know, the Myanmar government is currently reforming its policies in this area. Lou Tessier has gained a thorough understanding of the politics and policies of the government and will share her knowledge with you later on. Eventually, it will be up to you, the honorable members of parliament, to decide on the direction of social policies in your country.
7. Before handing over please allow me to provide you with some short background information on the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). FES is a German Political Foundation, in fact we are the first, oldest and biggest foundation from Germany. Unlike most foreign organisations in Myanmar, we are not a newcomer to your country. FES has been supportive of Myanmar policy and development promotion since the early 1990s – and continued to do so even during the times of sanctions.
8. FES is an important member of the family of Social Democracy – in Germany, Europe and the World. In Germany we are closely affiliated to the Social Democratic Party – the ruling party in government right now in Germany. As social democratic foundation, we believe in and are committed to the values of social justice and peace.
9. One important means to achieve social stability is by establishing just policies for social protection. At FES we believe – and empirical evidence is supporting this – that there is no social stability without sufficient social protection.
10. For this reason, we are very glad to engage with you on this topic. FES has a very large international network of experts and

politicians. Depending on your wish, they would be ready to support your social protection policies in the future. FES will be ready to assist the Hluttaw – and to stay engaged in the long-term. We would be delighted if – during and after the workshop – you would contact me so that we can discuss activities for next years.

11. Our seminar is meant to be informal and interactive. We would like to encourage you to vividly become engaged in the discussions.
12. Before handing over - please allow me to thank all those for making this workshop happen. Let me express my special thanks to the ILO, namely Lou Tessier and her team. In addition I wish to convey my warmest thanks to my colleagues at FES, Ko Kaung and Ma Khine.
13. Again, I welcome you warmly on behalf of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. I wish us a successful workshop with lively debates and a high learning outcome.