



AUNG SAN SUU KYI SAYS 'I'VE NOT BEEN SILENT' ON MINORITIES AS SHE CONFIRMS BID FOR PRESIDENCY AT BBC WORLD DEBATE IN BURMA

June 7, 2013 – Aung San Suu Kyi, has confirmed her bid for the presidency of Burma at a BBC World Debate held yesterday.

The Nobel Peace Prize recipient was joined by U Soe Thane, one of Burma's leading reformist ministers, and Burmese activist and former political prisoner Zin Mar Aung for the debate, which was held in Nay Pyi Taw during World Economic Forum (WEF) East Asia.

During the event Aung San Suu Kyi discussed her desire to run for the presidency and answered critics' calls that she had been silent on issues surrounding citizenship for minority communities like the Rohingyas. She also stated her views on the country's change of name.

The debate was hosted by BBC World News presenter Nik Gowing and set out to discuss the future of Burma and the opportunities and challenges facing its people as the country undergoes major political and economic reforms. The debate was developed in partnership with the WEF.

The following are key quotes from the debate which was recorded yesterday, Thursday June 6, in Nay Pyi Taw. Please credit BBC World News if you reference any of this information.

The full debate broadcasts on BBC World News on Saturday 8th June at 12.10 AEST, Sunday 9th June at 19.10 and Monday 10th June at 07.10 AEST and on BBC World Service radio: Sunday June 9 at 22:00 AEST.

NG: Nik Gowing

ASSK: Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi on running for President

ASSK: I want to run for president and I'm quite frank about it, although I was told by a BBC interviewer that she never came across a politician who had ever admitted to wanting to run for the presidency.

NG: But you've just said you do.

ASSK: Yes I do. Because let's be open about it, there are those who say that I shouldn't say I would like to be president, but then if I pretended that I didn't want to be president, I

wouldn't be honest and I would rather be honest with my people than otherwise. But in order for me to run for the presidency, you don't really run for the presidency because the presidents are not directly elected, but for me to be eligible for the post of presidency, the constitution will have to be amended.

NG: And you're clearly reasonably optimistic that those changes to the constitution are now likely to happen?

ASSK: I don't believe in indulging in optimism. Let me put it this way. I've always said hope has to be backed up by endeavour. So rather than being optimistic or hoping that the constitution will be amended, we're going to work for the constitution to be amended.

Aung San Suu Kyi on Burma/Myanmar

NG: Real expectation on you particularly to resolve this issue of citizenship for minorities like the Rohingyas.

ASSK: First of all I have not been silent, it's just that they're not hearing what they want to hear from me. But I cannot doctor my answers to please everybody. I have to say what I believe in, and I believe that the rule of law is the first step towards any kind of solution to the problems in the Rakhine state and other parts of this country. And of course that's not an exciting answer so people would rather think that I was not saying anything than that I was saying something so boring that they'd rather not hear. But, it is a practical need and as I said we must get to the point of reassessing the law to see if it comes up to international norms or not. And I would like people all over the world to understand that we are aware of the difficulties in our country and we are doing our best to cope with it. When I say we, I'm not talking about the government, I'm talking about the ordinary people of Burma. Because Burma is made of different races and different religions and I really must take up this question of Burma/Myanma, which you mentioned just now. It reminds me very much of a line I think it was Paul Collier in his book, that it's easier to rename a country than to change it. As you know Burma was renamed Myanmar sometime under the previous military regime, in 1991-1992, suddenly one day they decided that they want to change the name of the country. Now the reason why I stick to the name Burma is because the country was not changed in accordance with the will of the people, the people had nothing to do with it and also I think that there was something intrinsically dishonest about the change in name. The implication that Myanmar refers to all the ethnic nationalities of Burma, which it does not. Myanmar is simply a literary form of Burma which means just the Burmese ethnic group. So I want to make this quite clear because if we are going to resolve our problems we've got to face them squarely. It's not going to make them go away simply by putting a different name onto it. And it's the same thing we the problem of our Muslims in Burma. It's a big problem, it's a complicated problem particularly because Islam has spread worldwide and there are Islamic links everywhere and anything that happens in the world is known immediately.

-Ends-

For more information contact: Nicole Hurren, nicole.hurren@bbc.com, ph: 02 9744 4551

World Debate convenes panels that engage in a robust exchange of views on issues that matter around the globe. The programme has assembled an extraordinary roll call of world leaders and global figures in its history: Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Kevin Rudd, Felipe Calderon, Michelle Bachelet, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Bill Gates and Indra Nooyi among many others. The Debates are recorded before a live studio audience.

The BBC attracts a weekly global audience of 239 million people to its international news services including **BBC World Service**, **BBC World News** television channel and [**bbc.com/news**](http://bbc.com/news).

BBC World News and bbc.com/news, the BBC's commercially funded international 24-hour news and information platforms, are owned and operated by **BBC Global News Ltd**, a member of the BBC's commercial group of companies. **BBC World News** is available in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide, and over 350 million households and 1.8 million hotel rooms. The channel's content is also available on 152 cruise ships, 40 airlines and 23 mobile phone networks. For further information on how to receive **BBC World News**, download schedules or find out more about the channel, visit bbc.com/tvschedule. [**bbc.com**](http://bbc.com) is one of the most respected brands on the internet and the global news content on the site offers up-to-the minute international news and in-depth analysis for PCs, tablets and mobile devices to more than 58 million unique users each month.