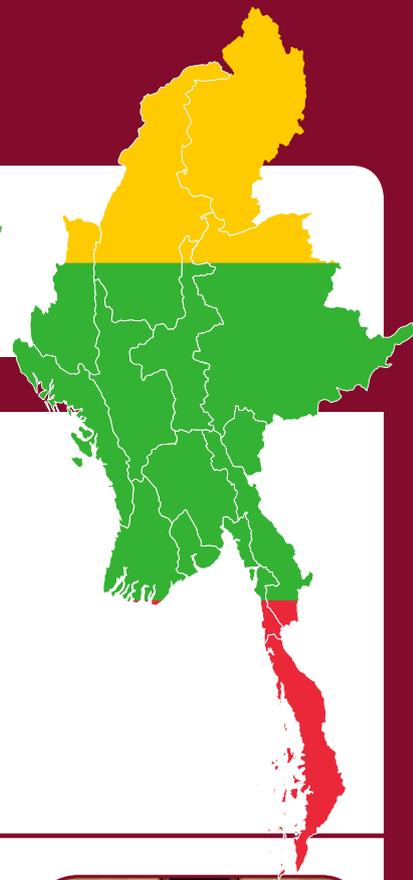


## High Level Support for Effective Dialogue in Myanmar Towards Democratic Transition and Shared Societies



The Club de Madrid (CdM) supports Myanmar's political and social leaders in building peaceful coexistence and national cohesion by increasing leaders' exposure to different concepts and practices regarding federalism models and social inclusion policy options. In 2015, Club de Madrid's Members, together with international experts, will provide **leader-to-leader advice**; inform and foster **inclusive, open national debate**; and prepare stakeholders for the **national political dialogue process**, the second-phase of the peace negotiations. The project will engage relevant stakeholders, including government – both reformists and those reluctant to change - opposition leaders, military elite, selected MPs, religious, ethnic leaders, civil society and private sector representatives and media.

### Background

In March 2011, the Myanmar Parliament born of a November 2010 election picked a new civil government after decades of an autocratic military regime. Former General **Thein Sein** was named President and initiated a series of unexpected reforms inviting opposition icon **Aung San Suu Kyi** to join him in his efforts. The new authorities took on a series of positive measures which impressed many observers by their quickness and extent: release of political prisoners, partial lifting of media censorship, authorization of trade unions, right to demonstrate and return of opposition exiles.

Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy have entered the legislative process when she and other party representatives gained seats at the parliament during a by-election in April 2012 and are playing a constructive role to promote further reforms including potential Constitutional amendments and a truly democratic election in 2015.

From the ethnic conflict perspective, between 1989 and 2007 the military regime signed a series of cease-fire agreements with more than twenty ethnic armed groups. After Thein Sein reached to the Presidency, in 2011, the government started negotiations with additional ethnic armed groups and new cease fire agreements have been signed with the expectation of an inclusive peace process involving all ethnic groups.

On August 2014, the Union Peace Working Committee (UPWC) led by President's Office Minister Aung Min, and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), representing 16 armed ethnic groups, agreed to establish a federal system of government for the fifth formal cease-fire agreement talks. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for November and, although the government of President Thein Sein have repeatedly promised they would be free, fair and inclusive, many challenges remain unresolved.

In this context, CdM Members **Wim Kok**, former Prime Minister of The Netherlands, and **Kjell Magne Bondevik**, former Prime Minister of Norway, led two Trust Building Missions to Myanmar on February and June 2013 to reinforce trust with Burmese authorities, opposition, civil society, ethnic groups and other relevant stakeholders. The objective was to identify a potential long-term initiative to provide Burmese leadership accompaniment, counsel and support in facing the daunting challenges of democratic transition, including the likely increased tensions as the country gets closer to the 2015 general elections. With the support of the Charitable Foundation, the project "**High Level Support for Effective Dialogue in Myanmar: Towards Democratic Transition and Shared Societies**" was launched in January 2015.



## Objectives

- ◆ Harness the political experience of Club de Madrid members combined with selected international experts' knowledge to showcase and analyze pros and cons of different decentralization and territorial organization modalities.
- ◆ Provide quality information and enrich the debate on policy options and ways to implement them, drawing on the experience of its members who have led countries with federal or highly decentralized political systems.
- ◆ Support the development of all political parties' capacities, including National League for Democracy (NLD), National Democratic Force (NDF), ethnic minorities' political parties, and the governing Union Solidarity and Development Party (USPD).
- ◆ Provide informed and independent advice on topics such as social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, inclusive development, diversity in education and media, in order to enable political parties' leaders and mid-level officials to develop more consistent political programs and effective policy proposals, informing key legislation and aiming to yield sustainable growth and tangible development results for the poor.



## Topics



**Decentralization:** in a multiethnic, multilingual, religious and politically diverse state, affected by entrenched identity divisions and tensions over natural resources, the establishment of an effective decentralized system could be the appropriate solution to advance national unity and ensure a fairer distribution of power and resources, as well as a lasting and sustainable peace.



**Social Cohesion:** national cohesion will require, in addition to a federal structure, specific social inclusion policies and programs, so as to gradually develop and nurture peaceful coexistence and mutual respect between the Burmese majority and the ethnic minority groups, and thus contribute to overcoming one of the world's longest-running civil wars with an appalling human rights record.



The **Club de Madrid's Shared Societies Project** is a global initiative that provides leaders with a greater understanding of the benefits of social cohesion, the incentives and means to act to advance it, is especially relevant for this challenge. The project can provide valuable ideas, materials and tools to the Burmese experience, such as the 10 Commitments and approaches for Shared Societies and the Economic Argument for Shared Societies. CdM Members can share relevant experiences from divided societies which have been able to overcome historical differences to build a more cohesive and inclusive citizenship.

## About the Club de Madrid

The Club de Madrid is an independent non-profit organization composed of more than 100 democratic former Presidents and Prime Ministers from more than 71 different countries, constituting the world's largest forum of former Heads of State and Government, who have come together to address the challenge of democratic governance and political conflict as well as that of building functional and inclusive societies, where the leadership experience of our Members is most valuable.



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## Club de Madrid Members Involved

**KJELL MAGNE BONDEVIK**  
Prime Minister of Norway  
(1997-2000, 2001-2005)

**TARJA HALONEN**  
President of Finland (2000-2012)

**WIM KOK**  
Prime Minister of the Netherlands (1994-2002)

**CHANDRIKA KUMARATUNGA**  
President of Sri Lanka (1994-2005)

**JOSÉ MANUEL RAMOS-HORTA**  
President of Timor-Leste (2007-2012)

**KEVIN RUDD**  
Prime Minister of Australia (2007-2010, 2013)

**HAN SEUNG-SOO**  
Prime Minister of Korea (2008-2009)

**BORIS TADIC**  
President of Serbia (2004-2012)

**JIGME YOSER THINLEY**  
Prime Minister of Bhutan (2008-2013)

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