



## Transcript

# Video Message: Aung San Suu Kyi's Acceptance of the Chatham House Prize 2011

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

General Secretary, National League for Democracy; Winner of Chatham House Prize 2011

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## **Aung San Suu Kyi:**

I can only begin by thanking the members of Chatham House for honouring me with the Prize for 2011. I would particularly like to thank the patron, Her Majesty the Queen. As I express my thanks for her, may I also express my profound admiration for her sense of duty. Throughout our years of struggle, we have discovered how important a sense of duty is, in any situation in life.

I would also like to thank my very good friend Madeleine Albright, for receiving the Prize on my behalf. As she is an expert on international affairs there's very little I need say on the subject. Nobody knows more about such matters than she does.

I'm sorry I cannot be with all of you today, it would have been such a joy, and such an honour.

The aims of Chatham House – to promote a more prosperous, secure world through analysis, debate, and ideas – is one that we all share [sic]. We want a more prosperous, more secure Burma. We want a Burma where there's freedom to debate, and to exchange ideas, and to analyse the situation as we see it. Burma is now at an important juncture in its modern history. We have come to a path where we may be able to progress towards our long-cherished goal of democracy and freedom. But there are risks involved. We have to make decisions, and to make the right decisions, we have to have the right ideas. We have to be able to have debates, to decide what we should do. This is why the values of Chatham House are so important to us today.

Many people are asking whether what is happening in Burma is 'for real', as they say, or whether this is just another piece of window-dressing. I believe that there are elements within the government who are genuine in their desire to bring about democratic reforms that would put our country on the path to prosperity and security.

And it is worthwhile to take the risk; to accept that there is a possible opening. If we will wait only for solid guarantees, we can never proceed. We have to take risks. We have to take the courage to face a future that is not really known to us. No future can be known to us – we can only speculate. And whether or not we speculate correctly depends very much on freedom of information, on the exchange of ideas, on our ability to debate and to analyse.

Throughout the last two decades we have been greatly helped by our friends from all over the world. International support has been crucial to the movement for democracy in Burma. At those times when it seemed as though

we could not move because of the extreme oppression, our friends, who were in freer climes, moved for us, and that kept us going.

This is an age when we have to be aware of the importance of global contacts.

As we take this difficult path – new paths are always difficult because we do not know what lies ahead – as we take this difficult path towards difficult choices, we would like to think that our friends are with us, in their understanding, in their support, and in their practical wisdom. With such friends, we will be able to overcome the obstacles that no doubt will arise. No path to a worthwhile goal is smooth or easy. But still it is a path worth treading.

Democracy and freedom are important to us because without the basic institutions of democracy, we cannot have the kind of security which Chatham House envisages for the whole world.

We always speak of security and freedom. These two, in the right balance, is what will secure prosperity for any community, any country, and for our whole world. The importance of the links between freedom and security cannot be overemphasized, and we depend on people like you to focus on these values and to think up new ideas that will enable us to gain these much-cherished goals. As we proceed, we know that the world will open up for us. And as the world opens up for us, we hope that we too can open up to the world and make our own contribution. What we want is a world where give and take are equal. People give and people take in confidence, in friendship, in trust, in understanding. This is the way to go forward to a world which will be assured of security by freedom from prejudice, freedom from fear, freedom from want.

I'm convinced that Chatham House and its members are doing much to help us in our endeavours – if not directly, at least indirectly – every time they promote the values that help us to secure a more prosperous and free society.

As I cannot be with you in person today, I can only send my best wishes to you now, looking at this camera – it's very strange sending best wishes to a lens, but my wishes are not the less genuine for that. I wish you all very well, and I wish that the day will come soon when you can come to us in Burma, and help us with your new ideas, your new visions for the future.

Thank you.