I am delighted to hear that Burmese doctors have gathered together to discuss the improvement of maternal and child health. My mother had been involved in maternal and child care for many years. Since my childhood, I have been familiar with the terms maternal and child welfare and health. Since I was a child, I have seen and experienced the issues of maternal and child health in a developing country.

What is very sad is that, as all of you who are attending the conference are well aware, the development of maternal and child health is not developed as well as it should in Myanmar. The situation of maternal and child health in our country is still very weak. Things that needed to have happened have not happened. This situation has festered on for years. It is so encouraging to know that you are now focusing on maternal and child health.

Now that the National League for Democracy party has won some seats at the recent by-elections, we have started to implement activities that will be beneficial to the public. In implementing activities for the benefit of our people we want to prioritise the welfare and health of mothers and children.

In our endeavours, I ask doctors who are present here to help in any way you can. Doctors, who are abroad and have become very learned and experienced in the medical field, if you will help our people in any way you can, this will contribute towards the development of the country.

I would like to remind all learned doctors that, in our country, one cannot differentiate between development and politics. Some think that if we get development and business success, it is enough, and that politics is not important. In reality, if the political system is not right, one cannot maintain development in the long run. This is a lesson the world is learning on a daily basis.

That’s why, my dear doctors, if you are serious about working for the health of mothers and children, you will need to help bring about genuine democracy. Unless mothers and children can learn to protect themselves and their health and know their rights, we cannot rest. It is not enough that people from outside help. That’s why, as you discuss the importance of how you would practically promote maternal and child health, please consider also how you would find opportunities for mothers and children to participate.

Before long I pray that we will meet again in Myanmar. Thank you.

Aung San Suu Kyi, speaking to the Building Bridges seminar at the University of Sydney via video link.