

MEDIA RELEASE

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DICA and MCRB Launch Guide to “Respecting Myanmar Culture in the Workplace”

Yangon, Myanmar – The Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) and the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB) today launched an guide to “*Respecting Myanmar Culture in the Workplace*”. The guide aims to help foreigners understand Myanmar culture and avoid cross-cultural misunderstanding in the workplace and with local communities. It was developed by the MCRB, in partnership with DICA and with input from other Ministries.

With illustrations by prominent Myanmar cartoonist Aw Pi Kyeh, and covering topics such as dress code, eating and drinking, greetings and body language, the guide highlights the importance of listening to and learning from local people, to help prevent conflict and contribute to commercial success. While it mainly focuses on building mutual respect and understanding, rather than legal requirements, it makes clear that investors should ensure that they are familiar with Myanmar workplace laws, including those concerning labour, health and safety and environmental protection.

U ThaugTun, Union Minister for the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations (MIFER), said: **“Responsible investment is respectful investment. Workplaces which are respectful and inclusive are invariably more productive, and with lower turnover of the workforce. Respect for diverse cultures and traditions will undoubtedly contribute to the wider goals of our government, including sustainable peace.”**

Vicky Bowman, Director of MCRB, added: **“Minor cultural misunderstandings by foreign company employees can escalate into wider grievances – including with local communities –which can ultimately jeopardise investments. They can also contribute to less motivated and less productive workplaces.”**

Through gathering inputs from focus groups and interviews with various stakeholders – including government, the private sector, NGOs, communities, and employees with experience of foreign workers – the guide tries to provide a broad understanding of the main Myanmar cultural norms, while also recognising Myanmar as a country with diverse ethnic cultures, languages and religions. The guide highlights in particular that investors and their employees need to understand local culture in remote locations so as not to cause offence.

“Respect for Myanmar’s many cultures is an important part of promoting equality, combatting discrimination and creating a respectful workplace” observed Ms Bowman.

U Thaung Tun added: **“Although this guidebook is primarily targeted at foreign managers, to help them respect and comply with the customs, traditions and traditional culture of the ethnic groups in the Union, the messages in it are important for all.”**

The *Respecting Myanmar Culture in the Workplace* guide is now available online www.dica.gov.mm, www.mcrb.org.mm in English, Myanmar and Chinese Versions. Japan, Korean and Thai are planned for release later this year.

Printed copies of the guide will also be available via DICA’s state and regional offices, events, and samples will be distributed to Ministries, Organizations with further hard copies available for purchase from MCRB with a small charge to cover printing costs.

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Overview of Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations_ MIFER and Directorate of Investment and Company Administration_ DICA

November 2018, the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations was a ministry-level body that serves the Government of Myanmar, it headed by Union Minister U Thaung Tun. The Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) is a department of MIFER, and in charge of handling company registrations for local and foreign businesses under the Myanmar Companies Law. DICA also serves as a secretary office to the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC), which is the responsible body for investment applications. (www.dica.gov.mm)

Overview of Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business_ MCRB

Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB) is a Yangon-based initiative funded by the UK, Norway, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Ireland, based on collaboration between the UK-based Institute for Human Rights and Business, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The Centre was established in 2013 to provide an effective and legitimate platform for the creation of knowledge, capacity and dialogue concerning responsible business in Myanmar, based on local needs and international

standards, which results in more responsible business practices. It is a neutral platform working with business, civil society and government. (www.mcrb.org.mm)

For more information, please contact:

Directorate of Investment and Company Administration _ DICA: Dr. Wunna Aung,
Director, Investment Promotion Division, dica.ip.mm@gmail.com (or) 01 658132

Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business_ MCRB: PhyuPhyuZin, Information and
Communication Officer, phyuphyu.zin@myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org or
09799667713