

Union Minister U Kyaw Tin delivers a statement at Ministerial Meeting of
Coordination Bureau of Non-Aligned Movement held in Caracas

Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin participated at the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordination Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) held in Caracas, Venezuela from 20 to 21 July 2019 and delivered a statement in the debate under the theme “Promotion and Consolidation of Peace through Respect for International Law”.

Union Minister U Kyaw Tin made a statement in the first session of the debate of the Ministerial Meeting on 20 July 2019 recalling that the Non-Aligned Movement was founded based on the Bandung Principles at the height of the Cold War and had envisaged a peaceful and prosperous world and a just and equitable order where states can determine independently their own destinies. Regardless of the profound changes of the world, he added, the founding principles and purposes of the Movement still remained relevant and valid. He emphasized the importance for all NAM member states to remain committed to the core principles of the Movement, especially the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity, justice, equality and mutual respect among nations without interfering in the internal affairs of another country and settlement of disputes by peaceful means. In today’s world, developing countries are still far from enjoying the right to determine their own destiny or resolve their own internal problems in their own way best suited to their own circumstances. Even some of the United Nations today are focusing more on retribution than helping the countries resolve their problems by peaceful means. It is the duty of the United Nations to help in bringing conflicting communities together rather than making them further apart. The unity of the Movement is therefore of paramount importance to stand up together against their common challenges. He also urged the NAM member states to be careful not to allow

anyone to misuse the platform of the Movement to serve one's own political agenda against other member states.

The Union Minister stated that observance of the principles of international law applicable to each member state is of utmost importance for the maintenance of the world peace and security. He reminded, however, that application of international law must be based on principles of objectivity, impartiality and avoidance of double standard. He expressed serious concern over the claim of jurisdiction of ICC to a country which is not a party to the Rome Statute, citing the 1969 UN Vienna Convention on International Treaties which clearly states that "no treaty can be imposed on a country that has not ratified it". The extension of the jurisdiction to a non-party may have a reverberating effect to all non-parties and challenges the long established legal principles such as legal certainty. It will also run counter to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and set a very dangerous precedence in international law.

The Union Minister also took the opportunity to brief the meeting on Rakhine issue, highlighting that the issue of Rakhine is just one of the many challenges facing Myanmar in its efforts for peace, national reconciliation, development and democracy. But the world's attention is focused on the negative aspect of this particular issue due to the one-sided media campaign, wrongfully depicting it as a religious issue. It is neither an issue of religious persecution nor an issue of driving an ethnic group out of the country as widely portrayed. He highlighted that it is a political and economic issue involving cross-border irregular migration since colonial time, poverty, lack of rule of law and security. There had been deep rooted history of tensions, mutual mistrust and fear between the ethnic communities of Rakhine and the migrant communities. It will take time to educate both communities to live harmoniously. The Union Minister also pointed out the fact that in the remaining parts of Myanmar, people of different faiths are living in peace and harmony. Religious

edifices of different faiths stand side by side under each other's shades in many cities of Myanmar. It is utmost important to try to understand different narratives, the historical facts and complete information about this communal conflict before making a judgement of the issue.

The Union Minister underscored that Myanmar fully shares the concern over the plight of all communities affected by the violences. He stressed that it should not be overlooked that the violence was ignited by provocative coordinated attacks of ARSA terror group against multiple police outposts on 9 October 2016 and on 25 August 2017. The violences were committed by both sides and affected all communities. He assured that the Government must therefore provide safety and security and protect the rights of all affected communities, not just one community. That is why the civilian government, immediately after taking office, set up the necessary mechanisms to tackle the issue including Advisory Commission on Rakhine State led by Dr Kofi Annan on its own volition to seek a long-lasting solution to the issue. Many overlook the fact that this massive outflows of the displaced persons was manipulated by staging provocative brutal attacks by ARSA as part of their strategy to attract the world's attention to advance their political agenda. Many conveniently ignore these underlying facts and the sufferings, insecurity and legitimate fears of many ethnic communities in Rakhine State. The Government is fully committed to find a sustainable solution that would lead to peace, stability and development for all people in Rakhine State. The Government has recently taken steps to speed up implementation of the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Commission in remaining key areas and also finalised a National Strategy for closure of all IDP camps in consultation with the UN and external experts.

The Union Minister mentioned that the most pressing task now is to remove the obstacles hindering the repatriation and reiterated the readiness of the Government to receive all the returnees who can be verified as former

residence in accordance with the bilateral arrangements. He stressed that the following week, the Government of Myanmar will despatch a team comprising of Myanmar high-level officials accompanied by representatives of ASEAN and AHA Centre to Bangladesh to inform the displaced persons about the preparations made for their return. The Government of Myanmar has already provided Bangladesh with a long list of verified persons. He underscored that if both neighbours follow the bilateral arrangements, the repatriation can be made a success, as has been done before. The main obstacle is the presence of hardline groups inside Bangladesh who do not want repatriation but international pressure to create a so-called “Safe Zone” to advance their political agenda. The Government of Myanmar is creating a conducive environment for the returnees in cooperation with UN agencies and our ASEAN team. Trilateral MoU with UNDP and UNHCR was extended in last May and access has been given to over eighty villages in Rakhine State during their four rounds of field assessments. The ASEAN team submitted its report on their preliminary assessment to the recent ASEAN Summit which has tasked the ASEAN Secretary-General to follow up the team’s recommendations.

The Union Minister also pointed out that the issue of Rakhine State is a complex one that requires time and space to build trust and harmony among communities. In these efforts, the Government of Myanmar would welcome willing partners who really wish to see the sustainable resolution of the issue. Myanmar stands ready to resolve the issue with the cooperation of Bangladesh based on the bilateral agreement reached. In this regard, the Union Minister also informed the meeting that he had recently extended an invitation to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh to visit Myanmar to discuss the issue.
