

**Information Update on Democracy, Peace Process and Rakhine State
(Geneva, 25 September 2019)**

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1. Democracy

(a) Myanmar observes International Democracy Day

International Democracy Day 2019 was observed with the theme of “participation” in Nay Pyi Taw on 15 September 2019.

At the event, the President stressed that Myanmar is in the democratic transition, and it is at the nascent stage. As democracy is interrelated with human rights and rule of law, failure in one of these segments will lead to the loss of other components. He highlighted the importance of inclusiveness as the people are sovereign in a democracy. He urged all people to work together towards a democratic federal union, to prevent re-emergence of authoritarianism and to ensure basic human rights for all.

The State Counsellor also highlighted that flourishing of democracy depends on individual understanding of the value of balancing act. It needs to strike a right balance between democracy and responsibility, which are inextricably intertwined.

Myanmar’s view is that democracy is built on inclusion, equal treatment and participation, and it is a fundamental building block for peace, sustainable development and human rights.

2. Peace Process

(a) Government holds press conference on peace process

The Ministry of Office of the State Counsellor held a press conference on peace process in Nay Pyi Taw on 13 September 2019. It was learnt that peace negotiation was held with Karen National Union (KNU) at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Yangon on 7 September. Then, negotiation with 10 signatories to Nation-wide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), including KNU, was also held on 10 September 2019.

There are 18 Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO). Among them, 10 EAO have already signed NCA. There are 8 EAOs that have not signed NCA.

The government is also preparing for holding the fourth session of the Union Peace Conference–21st Century Panglong with the NCA signatories before the 2020 General Election.

(b) NRPC holds peace dialogue with ethnic armed groups

Since the 3rd session of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong held in July 2018, the government has been meeting continuously with the EAOs.

The meeting on 7 September 2019 is the 10th time that the government is holding informal meeting on peace process with KNU. At the meeting with NCA signatory 10 EAOs on 10 September 2019, the implementation of the NCA, the federal framework, setting up democracy and basic federal principles in the peace conference by 2020, and the working process beyond 2020 were also discussed.

The representatives of National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) and representatives of the four groups Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), MNTJP Myanmar National Truth and Justice Party (MNTJP), Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF) and United League of Arakan (ULA) met in Kengtung in Shan State on 17 September 2019 to discuss signing of bilateral ceasefire agreement. Both sides have agreed to sign the bilateral ceasefire agreement as well as to tackle the internally displaced persons (IDP) issue, to hold talks again with the Tatmadaw, to establish communication offices to avoid further clashes, to make no arrests from both sides for building mutual trust and a common plan for NCA, to hold acceptable dialogues from both sides for stronger ceasefire agreement, and to hold another meeting in October 2019. Before this meeting, NRPC representatives and representatives of four EAOs met in Muse on 30 April, Mongla on 30 June and Kengtung on 31 August for the Bilateral Ceasefire Agreement.

(c) A coordination meeting held to familiarize the public with the Ethnic Rights Protection Bylaw

A coordination meeting to familiarize the public with the Ethnic Rights Protection Bylaw and to draft a strategic plan for ethnic rights was held in Nay Pyi Taw from 19 to 20 September 2019. In Myanmar, different unique ethnic races are residing side by side. Everyone is entitled to the same human rights and constitutional rights. The strategic plan

with yearly action plan will serve as a roadmap for ethnic affairs. It is expected that if it can be implemented properly every year, inequality will be reduced and it will contribute to ending armed conflicts and supporting national peace.

3. Recent Developments in Rakhine State

(a) UNSG Special Envoy visits Myanmar for 8th time

Myanmar is closely cooperating with Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Myanmar Ms. Christine Schraner Burgener. She visited Myanmar from 3 to 7 September 2019. During her 8th visit, she called on Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin in Nay Pyi Taw on 4 September 2019. They exchanged views on recent developments in Myanmar. They discussed possible ways and means to remove obstacles hindering repatriation of displaced persons from Rakhine State. Union Minister U Kyaw Tin cited ARSA's threat to those wishing to voluntarily return to Myanmar as major obstacle for repatriation. He also explained that non-compliance with the proper procedures for sending the forms as agreed in the bilateral arrangements was also another reason of unsuccessful repatriation on the agreed date of 22 August.

(b) UNHCR representative meets Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye received UNHCR Representative Mr Johan Cels in Nay Pyi Taw on 19 September 2019. During the meeting, they discussed the repatriation efforts for displaced persons in Bangladesh, cooperation with ASEAN nations on this matter, how high-level officials from Myanmar and ASEAN representatives have disseminated information in Cox's Bazar, plans moving forward, possible cooperation with UNHCR, and participation of a Myanmar delegation in the 70th ExCom meeting in Geneva and scheduled meeting with the High Commissioner for Refugees.

(c) Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs reiterates Myanmar's request to the Bangladeshi Ambassador for early repatriation of 444 Hindu displaced persons

Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs U Soe Han called in Mr Manjurul Karim Khan Chowdhury, Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to Myanmar in

Nay Pyi Taw on 5 September 2019 and reiterated Myanmar's request to the Bangladeshi side to send back soonest the 444 displaced persons of Hindu Faith who have expressed their desire to return to Myanmar.

During the meeting, the Permanent Secretary noted the efforts by Bangladesh in the unsuccessful attempt to commence the repatriation process scheduled for 22 August 2019 and reaffirmed Myanmar's desire to continue working together with Bangladesh in line with the existing bilateral agreements to realize the commencement of repatriation process of displaced persons from Rakhine State at an early date.

Furthermore, the Permanent Secretary recalled the Press Release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on 25 August 2019, stating that "it maintains its principled position of not preventing anyone, regardless of one's ethnic and religious identity, who intends to return to Myanmar anytime." and urged the Bangladesh Ambassador to repatriate the 444 displaced persons of Hindu Faith soonest in pursuant to Bangladesh's stated policy. He explained that, among those 444 Hindus include a number of holders of Naturalized Citizenship Cards of Myanmar, according to the press release of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

(d) Ambassadors Visit Returnees in Rakhine

A delegation comprised of Heads of Missions and senior diplomats from the Embassies of 9 ASEAN member states, China, India and Bangladesh as well as the representatives from UNDP and UNHCR, visited Rakhine State from 10 to 11 September 2019. During the visit, the delegation met with the returnees of the Hindu community and Muslim families who had also returned of their own volition, outside of the bilateral Arrangements.

(e) ICOE holds its eleventh meeting

The Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE) held its eleventh meeting from 10 to 11 September in Nay Pyi Taw. They discussed work progress of the Evidence Collection and Verification Team (ECVT). They also discussed documentation received from the Tatmadaw and Security forces. The Commission noted the report of ICOE's Advance Team

which visited Bangladesh from 17 – 20 August 2019. The ICOE appreciated the cooperation extended by Bangladesh to the Advance Team and looks forward to similar cooperation and security arrangements to the ECVT when they get to Cox's Bazar for taking of depositions and the collection of evidence. They continued their discussion on the framework of final report.

(f) Myanmar has verified 90 % of the list provided by Bangladesh

As of 9 September 2019, Myanmar has verified 20,139 persons, that is, 90 % of the list of 22,432 persons provided by Bangladesh after the 3rd JWG meeting held in Dhaka in October 2018. Among them, 12491 were verified as former residents; 114 as suspects involved in the terrorist attacks; 7534 as not included in the registered list of family household in Myanmar.

Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar,

Geneva.

25 September 2019