



MYANMAR

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun, Permanent Representative of Myanmar

Item 2: Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner Report

at the 45th Session of Human Rights Council

(Geneva, 14 September 2020)

Madam President, Madam High Commissioner,

Today, the world is still facing unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It continues to have devastating effects on almost all countries, in particular the developing countries. Myanmar is no exception.

Myanmar has taken the preventive measures from the beginning. In a country like Myanmar with the population of over 52 million, taking preventive measures to control and mitigate the spread of the pandemic is not an easy one. To prevent the outbreak of the pandemic, active participation and constant cooperation of the public are vitally important. Therefore, continued awareness campaign for compliance with COVID-19 health guidelines have being conducted in various ways. The State Counsellor herself regularly conveys such messages to the people through radio/tv and Facebook. While responding to the pandemic, the Government took a whole-of-nation approach and laid down the principle of “leaving no one behind” covering all vulnerable communities including IDPs.

Yet, after weeks of no community transmission of Covid-19 cases, the surge of new cases in recent days throughout the country is alarming. The Government together with people are doubling their efforts for containment of the pandemic. Taking this opportunity, I wish to thank our friends and partners including the UN for their assistance in our efforts to fight against COVID-19.

Madam President,

The COVID-19 has exacerbated the multiple challenges we face in our efforts for building a democratic federal union. As national reconciliation and peace, democracy and human rights and sustainable and inclusive development are intertwined in building democracy, the government is addressing the challenges in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Nothing can be set aside. With the pronouncement of making changes, since the day one in its office, the present civilian government has pursued utmost efforts for making all possible changes towards a democratic state. Many positive changes have been achieved to its political, socio economic and human rights landscape throughout the country.

Madam President,

For a country that has to endure internal conflicts for 7 decades, sustainable peace is the common desire of the people of Myanmar. Since the first Union Peace Conference also known as 21st Century Panglong held in 2016, several principles and agreements were adopted as parts of the Union Accord. The recent 4th Session of the Union Peace Conference, held last month, has demonstrated a significant achievement by signing of Part III of the Union Accord, a crucial step for establishing a democratic federal union.

Madam President,

The issue of Rakhine poses huge challenge for the Government. It is complex and delicate. Priority has been given to find a sustainable solution. Accordingly concrete steps have been taken. Immediately after taking office, the Government formed the Central Committee for the Implementation of Peace and Development in Rakhine State. Subsequently, the Advisory Commission, led by Dr. Kofi Annan, was set up. Within few weeks of the establishment of the Commission, the ARSA conducted terrorist attacks against police outpost in northern Rakhine in October 2016. Within 24 hours of submission of the report of the Commission to the Government, the ARSA again launched the

coordinated terrorist attacks against security outposts in northern Rakhine in August 2017. It is clear that these terrorist attacks were deliberate attempts to derail our efforts to find an everlasting solution to the issue of Rakhine, and it triggered the current humanitarian crisis. We fully share the concern over all affected communities. Commencement of repatriation is our priority. It has to be pursued in accordance with the bilateral agreements between Bangladesh and Myanmar. The challenge has been further compounded by the increased fighting between the Military and the AA. With the assistance of WFP and ICRC as well as local NGOs, humanitarian assistance is provided to the affected people.

I would like to reiterate again that Myanmar is willing and able to address the issue of accountability. The Government has been taking necessary action based on the recommendations contained in the report of the Independent Commission of Enquiry submitted to the President in January 2020.

Myanmar has been working closely with UNHCR, UNDP as well as with ASEAN to facilitate the implementation of the bilateral agreements between Myanmar and Bangladesh on the repatriation, resettlement, and development of returnees.

Parts of our efforts for creating conducive environment, the Rakhine State Government is implementing Social Cohesion Township Model Project in Maungdaw Township, in cooperation with Center for Diversity and National Harmony(CDNH). The project includes trainings on social cohesion and intercultural competence, rumour management and sustainable peace and development. Friendly Bazaars are also opened in Sittwe, Kyauttaw, Mrauk-U, Minbya, Buthidaung and Maungdaw. To build understanding, respect and trust among young people of all communities living in Rakhine State and to improve their ability to work with each other and to take the leading promoting social cohesion within individual and among different communities, more than 35 youth camps have been organized. As part of the plan of action for prevention

of hate speech and for living in harmony in Rakhine State, an Anti-Hate Speech Campaign was conducted simultaneously in (17) townships in Rakhine States in March 2020.

Though no official repatriation has resumed, 355 displaced persons came back voluntarily on their own arrangements from April 2018 to April 2020. Due to prevention of spread of COVID-19, restriction on border crossing was imposed. Accordingly, we do not allow return of any displaced person through unofficial routes. However, around 80 displaced persons had returned, and they were placed under quarantine at Hlaphokaung transit centre in Maungdaw Township before transferring them to the villages.

Madam President,

Many challenges remain in our efforts towards a democratic federal union though many positive changes took place in last 4 and half years in Myanmar. We believe that externalizing the issue of Rakhine is only fanning the flames of an extreme polarization which can harm the values of peace and harmony in Myanmar. I wish to stress time and again that it needs to be mindful of the complexity and sensitivity of various issues in Myanmar. However, we are resolute to overcome these long and complex challenges with our concerted and relentless efforts. Only constructive approaches, respecting the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity will be able to find a sustainable solution to the challenges.

No one cares the prosperity of Myanmar than its people. The people of Myanmar have desire to make positive changes for the country. People can express their desire through the forthcoming general elections. With the desire of the people, the present Government will continue making changes towards a democratic federal union. Enabling the Government to do so, it is important that the continued support from within and abroad be extended to Myanmar. Hence, exerting undue political pressure on Myanmar should be avoided; instead the

international community should render genuine cooperation, constructive engagement and helping hands to Myanmar.

I thank you.
