MYANMAR

*please check against delivery**

Statement by Ambassador Hau Do Suan, Permanent Representative of Myanmar at the General Assembly Briefing Session by Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Myanmar

(United Nations, New York, 1 July 2019)

Madam President,

First of all, I would like to express Myanmar Government's sincere appreciations to the Special Envoy Ambassador Christine Sherener Burgener for her tireless efforts in discharging her responsibilities as mandated by the General Assembly. She has been undertaking her duties with goodwill, impartiality, objectivity and sincerity. We are confident that the mutual trust and understanding, and the spirit of cooperation that have been established between the Government of Myanmar and the Special Envoy will continue and contribute to bringing successful outcomes in our common endearvours to solve the complex issues facing Rakhine State.

Madam President,

My delegation thanks the Special Envoy for her presentation this morning about the situation in Rakhine State in a balanced and objective manner. The United Nations has spent quite a considerable time and resources under its various mechanisms to deliberate on the situation in Rakhine.

However, the international community has focused its attention exclusively on the plight and rights of the Muslims community out of ten different communities living in together in Rakhine and facing many common challenges.

I would like to remind once again that the communal tension and conflicts have long been existed for many decades way back since pre-independence colonial time.

It is the present democratic Government that had initiated to find comprehensive and lasting solution to the problem.

Immediately after taking state responsibilities, the Government established the Central Committee for the implementation of Peace, stability and Development of Rakhine State with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as Chair.

A few months later, in September, the Kofi Annan Foundation was invited by the State Counsellor, and the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State was established, with a mandate to examine the complex challenges facing Rakhine State and to propose responses to these challenges. The Commission was a national entity and the majority of its members were from Myanmar.

However, Myanmar's genuine efforts to find a peaceful solution had been disrupted by deliberate and coordinated massive armed attacks of Arakan Rohigya Salvation Army a.k.a Al Yakin or Faith Movement on security posts in October 2016 and August 2017.

The response of the security forces and ARSA's political machination resulted in mass displacement of the Muslims for Rakhine State. The majority of them crossed the border and took shelter in Bangladesh.

These are plain facts and nothing can be further from the truth. Here, we have two narratives. One is the attacks by ARSA and the other is the response by the security forces or the Tatmadaw. But the international community never speaks about the first narrative of ARSA attacks which in fact is the real cause that triggered the whole humanitarian problem we are facing today.

The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (The Annan Commission) issued its interim recommendations in March 2017 and presented its final report on 24 August 2017, just a few hours before ARSA's second major armed attacks on 30 security posts.

The Commission's Final Report contains 88 recommendations under 17 sections including, the economic and social development; citizenship; freedom of movement; IDPs; humanitarian access; bilateral relationship with Bangladesh; regional relations etc.

In September2017, a Ministerial Committee for implementation of the recommendations was formed. Subsequently, an Advisory Board led by former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, was also established in December the same year to give advisory opinion to the Implementation Committee.

After putting in place necessary mechanisms, the Government immediately embarked on implementation of the recommendations in line with the situation on the ground. We have done this in good faith.

We have made great stride in implementation of the majority of the recommendations. Some recommendations are for short terms or immediate implementation but, some may need longer time. Some results are visible and countable. But, some may not immediately bring about tangible results.

For example, in the process of implementation of the recommendation for "Inter-Communal Cohesion", more than 200 awareness raising and capacity building trainings and activities, more than 20 youth camps and over 150 vocational training have been conducted between 2017 and 2019. More than 80 stakeholders and community dialogues have also been held. The result of these efforts cannot be visible right now.

However, implementation of "Economic and Social Development", such as infrastructure development, construction of schools and hospital, and electrifications can be visible.

We are now turning our focus on human aspects by prioritizing implementation of recommendations on citizenship, freedom of movement, closure of IDP camps and promotion of education and health sector.

There have been criticisms against Myanmar as to the speed and scope of the implementation of the recommendations. The Commission's 88 recommendations cannot be implemented overnight. You cannot impost time frame or set bench marks for every single recommendation. We have to take it step by step as the situation on the ground permits. We have to make sure that the security of all community is ensured which is of utmost importance for us today.

It depends on how you see the glass: half full or half empty.

Madam President,

Allow me to update the General Assembly with how we are advancing in the implementation of the Annan Commission recommendations in respect to some key sectors.

Let me begin with repatriation of the displaced people from Rakhine State.

Bilateral cooperation between Myanmar and Bangladesh is crucial to the success of the repatriation process. We believe that all obstacles could be overcome through dialogues with good will and sincerity. We have done it successfully twice in the past and there is no reason we will not succeed this time.

We have repeatedly said that we are ready to receive verified displaced persons who are former residents of Rakhine in accordance with the bilateral agreement and arrangement of 23 November 2017.

Regarding the verification process, poor compliance with the agreed form was a challenge for our side in processing verification of the list from Bangladesh.

We have so far received a list of 8,032 people for the first batch and 22,432 people for the second batch from Bangladesh side. 5,452 people for the first batch and 7,783 people for the second batch have been verified as former residents of Rakhine.

They can return to Rakhine anytime through 2 reception centers along with 1222 pre-verified persons (444 Hindus and 778 Muslims). The officials are on duty at the two reception centers and transit camp 24/7 to facilitate the repatriation process.

Moreover, Myanmar will dispatch a high level delegation to Cox's Bazar to explain the displaced people the arrangements made for the repatriation and resettlement. Information flyers have been prepared for distribution.

Myanmar is also working actively with the United Nations to expedite the repatriation process. In this regard, Myanmar signed a trilateral MoU with UNDP and UNHCR in June last year to assist the government in implementation of bilateral arrangements for repatriation and resettlement. The MoU has been extended to another year.

The UN team is also implementing currently 34 Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) to provide basic needs of villagers from all community. The QIPs will be expanded to more villages as security condition improves. We hope that High Commissioner Grandi's recent visit to Myanmar, particularly to the Rakhine State, will serve a great impetus to further improving our cooperation concerning Rakhine State.

We are also working very closely with the ASEAN to hasten implementation of the repatriation process. ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre(AHA) and the ASEAN Emergency Response

and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) have successfully conducted a Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA) in March with a view to facilitating the repatriation process and providing humanitarian assistance in Rakhine. The ASEAN-ERAT report recommends to assist Myanmar in capacity building at reception centres and transit camp; information dissemination and provision of basic services in Rakhine State. At the recent ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, the leaders tasked ASEAN Secretary-General to follow up with these recommendations contained in the ASEAN-ERAT report.

I would like to express our appreciations to the Secretary-General of ASEAN, AHA Centre and ASEAN-ERAT for their valuable support to facilitate effective and speedy repatriation process and provision of humanitarian assistance.

Madam President,

Let me touch briefly on the citizenship issue. The Government of Myanmar has made its position very clear in this respect. Citizenship will be granted in accordance with the 1982 Citizenship Law. National Verification Card is proof of residency and also a necessary step to applying for citizenship. Therefore, everyone should cooperate with the authorities concerned so that the process of issuing NVC and citizenship application could be accelerated.

Madame President,

It is critically important that the report of the Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE) is credible in handling accountability question. The Commission has thus requested permission to visit refugee camps in Cox's Bazar to meet with displaced persons. Despite its repeated request since January, the Commission has not been granted permission by Bangladeshi authorities to visit the camps. We would like to urge Bangladesh to give travel permission to the ICOE as soon as possible so that the Commission can fulfill its mandate accurately and credibly in a timely manner.

Madam President,

The problem of Rakhine state is highly complex and multi-faceted. It is the combination of development, human rights and security crises.

Moreover, the latest security challenges wrought by Arakan Army attacks in Rakhine have made the situation in the region more complicated.

Despite all these challenges, the Government and people of Myanmar are determined to continue their efforts to build peace, stability, harmony and development in Rakhine State.

We shall be working with our friends at regional and international context based on mutual respect, mutual understanding, mutual trust and mutual benefit.

I would once again wish to express our deep appreciations to the Special Envoy Ambassador Burgener for her dedication and good will to help Myanmar in its efforts to democratic transition, peace and development.

I thank you Madam President.