MYANMAR

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Response

by

His Excellency U Hau Do Suan,

Ambassador/Permanent Representative

of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations

to the report of Ms. Yanghee Lee,

Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar

Agenda Item 73 (C):

"Promotion and protection of human rights:

human rights situation and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives"

at the

Third Committee of the 72nd Session of

the United Nations General Assembly

(New York, 25 October 2017)

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Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation thanks Special Rapporteur Prof. Yanghee Lee for her constructive comments and the recommendations mentioned in her report on the human rights situation in Myanmar. I would also like to thank the Special Rapporteur for her oral updates.

As many in this room, Myanmar steadfastly opposes country-specific mandates which run contrary to the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and non-politicization in addressing human rights issues. However, we have all along been extending our cooperation with the successive Special Rapporteurs in line with Myanmar's policy of prioritizing cooperation with the United Nations.

Myanmar dissociated itself from the adoption of the resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar at the 34th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC). Despite its dissociation, Myanmar agreed to accept the proposal for the 6th visit of the Special Rapporteur and to facilitate her HRC mandate. It was a 12-day visit across the country.

During the visit, many government representatives discussed with her the challenges facing our country and our efforts to resolve them. We have conveyed to the Special Rapporteur in clear term the extensive steps the government has taken to promote peace and development for the benefit of the people of Myanmar. We have also conveyed her challenges on the ground. We have stated that we are committed to overcoming the challenges we face.

Our goal is clear: to achieve a peaceful, democratic and prosperous country, for all the people of Myanmar. Forging a lasting nationwide peace is our priority. The Government is committed to building a democratic federal union based on the principles of freedom, equal rights and justice for all.

In her report, the Special Rapporteur set forth a long list of recommendations which contain 44 recommendations for the government, 4 for the international community and 1 for the United Nations. We have given full consideration to the recommendations and will be implementing them as the situation on the ground permits. We wish the report would have reflected the difficulties of resolving the problems that are legacy of decades of internal conflicts, isolation and underdevelopment. Therefore, we are disappointed with some of the recommendations which directly or indirectly could hinder our efforts for democratic transition, peace and development.

Mr. Chairman,

In spite of various constraints, Myanmar has made significant progress in promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedom of its people in the past few years. We are resolute to continuing our efforts. Here I would like to reiterate what State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said in her State of Union Speech on 12 October 2017. She said, "We will answer the call of the international community with our deeds and action rather than words."

Mr. Chairman,

Myanmar today is significantly different from the time when the first UN Independent Expert for Human rights on Myanmar was appointed 27 years ago. The new Government of Myanmar has made peace and national reconciliation a top priority, with the aim of establishing a democratic federal union. At the same time, the Government has set objectives of rebuilding the country's economy, opening Myanmar to the world, and making health and education the cornerstones of the nation's development. The Government has also begun reforming public institutions and strengthening the rule of law to create a fair and just society for all people in the country.

Just over eighteen months since the government came to office, Myanmar has made significant progress - from launching a new national health and education strategies to stabilizing the economy and building foundations for future growth.

We have also made some important headway in the peace process. The second session of the Union Peace Conference- 21st Century Panglong took place in May 2017. As an outcome, the Union Peace Accord Part One was signed. This is the first major agreement achieved between the Ethnic Armed Groups (EAOs), the Government,

Tatmadaw and the Parliament. This agreement includes 37 points covering the areas of political, economic, social, land and environment. Preparation works are underway for the third session of the Union Peace Conference.

Democratic change doesn't happen overnight. It is a hard fought process. As State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told the nation upon taking office, the victory of 2015 general elections were just the beginning of Myanmar's journey towards democracy, not the end. Myanmar still has a long way to go.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me turn briefly to the current situation in Rakhine State which has drawn much attention of the world today. It all began with the terrorist attacks on the 3 police outposts in northern Rakhine State last October, and the attacks on 30 police outposts and a regiment headquarters which happened again in August of this year. These premeditated terrorist acts of the so-called Rohingya Salvation Army have triggered immense human sufferings and humanitarian problems of all people living in the affected areas.

We strongly condemn the acts of terror committed by ARSA. We cannot condone terrorism in any form and manifestation. At the same time we condemn all human rights violations and unlawful violence. If there is concrete evidence, anyone who breaches the law will be brought to justice.

The Government of Myanmar is committed to a sustainable solution that would lead to peace, stability and development for all communities within the Rakhine State.

Immediately after assuming office, the State Counsellor formed the Central Committee on Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development of the Rakhine State. The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State led by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan was constituted by the Government. The Commission has submitted its final report on 24 August this year. In its report, the Commission recognizes that the situation in Rakhine is deeply complex and challenging and there are no quick fixes. We firmly believe that the Commission's recommendations will provide us with a viable roadmap to lasting peace in Rakhine State. With our firm commitment to the implementation such recommendations, a Ministerial-level committee has been set up to ensure that they are implemented expeditiously to the fullest extent, in line with the situation on the ground.

Mr. Chairman,

We take heed of the international community's concern on the current humanitarian situation at the border. We feel deeply for the suffering of all the people who have been caught up in the conflict. We are committed to taking all possible actions to alleviate the plight of these people and to the immediate return of peace and normalcy in the region.

In this regard, the Government has identified three main tasks to be undertaken promptly:

1. Repatriation and provision of humanitarian assistance to returnees;
2. Resettlement and rehabilitation of all displaced communities; and
3. Establishment of sustainable peace, stability and development in Rakhine State.

To implement the tasks, the Union Enterprise for humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine State (The Union Enterprise) was launched on 15 October. It is a partnership among the government, people, private sector, local NGOs and civil society organizations, development partners, UN agencies and INGOs. On 17 October, the Committee for Union Enterprise, chaired by the State Counsellor, was established to undertake operation of the Enterprise.

The Committee is working for the effective provision of humanitarian aid, to coordinate the resettlement and rehabilitation efforts and to carry out the development, leading to durable peace.

On 20 October 2017, the business community in Myanmar contributed Kyats 16.7 billion (USD 12 million) to the nation's efforts in achieving the Committee's goals.

Moreover, Myanmar and Bangladesh authorities are working on voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons. The delegation headed by the Home Minister of Bangladesh is currently in Myanmar for discussion on the issue of repatriation and border security cooperation between the two countries. During the visit, two MoUs have been signed on the establishment of border liaison office and on the security cooperation and dialogue.

The ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) is now working with the government of Myanmar for delivering humanitarian assistance to all displaced persons.

Myanmar is collaborating with the Red Cross Movement and donor countries to provide assistance expeditiously in accordance with humanitarian principles.

Mr. Chairman,

Cooperation with the United Nations is one of the corner stone of Myanmar Foreign Policy. The UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Mr. Jeffery Feltman has recently visited Myanmar and met with the leadership of the country. He also had the opportunity to see firsthand situation on the ground in Rakhine State.

No one can fully understand the situation of our country the way we do. No one can desire peace and development for our country more than us. As a fledgling democracy, Myanmar is still confronting with daunting challenges. But, the Government is resolute to make every effort to overcome those challenges. The understanding and support of the international community is critically important for the sustainability of Myanmar's democratic transition. As a responsible member of the international community, Myanmar will implement all its commitments, including promotion and protection of the rights of its people, in good faith and without fail.

I thank you.

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