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Statement

by

His Excellency Mr. Kyaw Tin

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

at the High-level Segment of the 34th Regular Session of

the Human Rights Council

Geneva, 28 February 2017

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Statement by His Excellency U Kyaw Tin, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar at the High-Level Segment of the Thirty-Fourth Session of the Human Rights Council

(Geneva, 28 February 2017)

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

It is indeed a great honor for me to address this High-Level Segment of the 34th Session of the Human Rights Council on behalf of the new democratic government of Myanmar. I would also like to congratulate you, on your election as the President of the Human Rights Council for 2017.

Mr. President,

Myanmar believes that peace, development and human rights are essential components of every society, and in the work of the United Nations.

The Human Rights Council should be promoting and protecting of the rights of **all** peoples and the interest of **all** states. Any deviation from such inclusive, equal and non-discriminatory approach will affect the confidence in the work of the Council by the member states of the United Nations. When we address human rights, we must address it impartially and without double standard.

Myanmar continues to believe that UPR is the most dependable process where all human rights situations can be addressed in an equal footing.

Mr. President,

It is indeed a great honor for me to address this High-Level Segment of the 34th Session of the Human Rights Council on behalf of the new democratic government of Myanmar. I would also like to congratulate you, on your election as the President of the Human Rights Council for 2017.

Mr. President,

Myanmar today is totally different from the past. It has now entered into a new era since the new democratically-elected government took office barely a year ago. Embracing the human rights values, the government has taken a new approach of engagement and cooperation in stepping up its efforts to promote and protect human rights for its entire populations.

Today, Myanmar is making efforts to reform its system of government to create a fair and just society for all our people with greater political freedom, greater media freedom, freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Despite significant progress, the Government is still facing numerous challenges under a complex political landscape in its serious efforts to build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic state.

Mr. President,

The people of Myanmar have long been deprived of their inherent right to live in peace and security, to fundamental freedom and to development. For a country that has experienced nearly seven decades of internal armed conflict, nothing is more important than the achievement of lasting peace and reconciliation. We believe in the strong linkage between sustaining peace and sustainable development. Without peace and stability, the country will not be able to move forward to genuine democracy with shared prosperity for all. With this in mind, the Government has made "national reconciliation and peace" one of the country's most important priorities and is fully committed to giving our utmost to achieve it.

The Government has pushed forward the peace process establishing a regular timetable for negotiation through the Union Peace Conferences and opening the dialogues to all ethnic armed groups. The first session of the Union Peace Conference, also known as 21st Century Panglong Conference was successfully concluded on 31 August 2016. Its second session is scheduled to take place next month, expecting more participation from various stakeholders. Recent armed clashes erupted in Northern Shan and Kachin State have highlighted the importance of achieving peace and even strengthened our firm resolve to move ahead with the process.

Mr. President,

The other challenge in national reconciliation is to bring harmony to the two communities in Rakhine State which has been dominating international attention for some time now. The issue of Rakhine is extremely complex and challenging. There are two communities, deeply divided, each with serious and legitimate concerns and deep rooted historical grievances.

It was even more compounded by the coordinated armed attacks against three border police posts in northern Rakhine State on 9th October 2016. There is worrying evidence, independently verified, that external actors are seeking to incite violence in the area, providing weapons and terror training to extremists. This is a dangerous new development. The situation is made worse by propaganda and well-funded disinformation campaign against Myanmar.

The government is fully alive to the issues and is making every effort to stabilize the current situation, whilst also seeking long-term solutions to the very real problems in the State.

The new Government has been wrongfully accused of indifference to the plight of the peoples of Rakhine State. Far from ignoring the situation, the Government has made it one of the first priorities and taken bold steps upon coming to power. It includes establishment of the Central Committee on Peace, Stability and Development of the Rakhine State, together with four working committees, and launching of National Verification Process to address the key issue of statelessness and ensure all those eligible were granted citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship law. A new cross-governmental steering committee has recently been set up to boost this process which is facing challenges to move forward due to opposition from both local communities and local major Islamic associations in the country.

In addition, an advisory commission, headed by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan was also set up in August 2016, amid strong opposition from many quarters, to assist the government in finding long-term solutions of the Rakhine State.

Mr. President,

We are cooperating with international donors and the UN and fellow ASEAN member states to provide humanitarian assistance for all communities in the affected areas.

In addition to providing humanitarian assistance, our focus now must be on finding real, lasting solutions to the situation in Rakhine. To that end, addressing the underlying poverty and crippling underdevelopment in the State will be critical. We are therefore developing an inclusive socio-economic development plan of the Rakhine State.

Mr. President,

The Government's effort to improve the situation in Rakhine Stae was gaining momentum when well-planned and well-coordinated armed attack broke out on 9 October 2016, resulting in the death of 9 police officers and loss of large cache of arms and ammunition. These provocative attacks marked a dangerous new development in the situation in Rakhine State. Since the day one, the State Counsellor has clearly instructed the security forces to strictly adhere to the law and international norms in their security response to arrest the attackers and to retrieve seized weapons.

I am pleased to inform the Council that with the stabilization of the situation in northern Rakhine State, the operations have ceased, curfew has been ease since the beginning of this month. Only police security forces remain to maintain peace and security.

Mr. President,

We are surprised by the recent allegations contained in the Flash Report unilaterally released by the OHCHR after interviewing a group of alleged victims on the side of Bangladesh. Although those allegations have yet to be verified for its objectivity and accuracy, we are deeply concerned and are taking them extremely seriously. However, we must be careful not to believe every allegation as there had been many cases of outright fabrication. As the State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, made clear in her telephone conversation with the High Commissioner, where there is clear evidence, the Government will take all necessary action.

We have therefore assigned the national investigation commission led by Vice President U Myint Swe to immediately look into those allegations. The commission has so far conducted three investigative visits in December, January and February. On its latest visit, following the recent OHCHR report, the Commission revisited 20 villages where abuses are alleged to have occurred.

The Investigation Commission is making renewed efforts to come up with a more thorough and credible report. To that end, the Bangladesh Government has already been requested to allow access for the Commission to Cox's Bazar to interview with the alleged victims mentioned in the OHCHR report. After the visit and investigation, the Commission will come out with a report on the incidents and subsequent allegations.

Where there are allegations of abuses, the victims concerned will be invited to travel to Myanmar under international protection to give evidence in the legal proceedings. It is being conducted based on international best practices and guidelines. If necessary, technical assistance will be sought from ASEAN member states and our neighbors in the review of the final findings of the Commission.

We have already shown our readiness to act where there is clear evidence of abuses. For example, the Government moved swiftly to take legal action on some police officers after a video emerged showing security forces committing abuses against villagers.

Mr. President,

The challenges in Rakhine cannot be seen in isolation from a narrow lens of human rights of one particular community alone. We must work together to protect and promote the fundamental human rights of both communities in an impartial way. We therefore ask the international community to take a more positive approach to help the government of Myanmar resolve the issues, rather than focusing on condemnation, punishment and resentment.

Mishandling of the issue would undoubtedly trigger chaos in our social life and tamper cohesive among various ethnic and religious communities. This could carry even the danger to derail the fragile democratization process which we all want to see succeed. While national remedy measures are yet to be exhausted, external interference of any form without the consent of the host country will only do more to inflame the problems than resolve them. What Myanmar needed most from the international community is to allow us necessary time and space to complete our ongoing national efforts.

It is time for the international community to show fairness and help a country which is firmly committed in promoting democracy and human rights. Any action by the HRC must be a cure and part of the solution, not part of the problem. Our focus now must be on resolving, not inflaming, the very evident tensions in the Rakhine State and on helping us bring the communities together instead of driving them further apart.

We therefore look to the international community to continue to help the Government of Myanmar to succeed in its democratic transition as well as in its serious efforts in national reconciliation and peace process including resolving the issues in Rakhine State.

I thank you, Mr. President.

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