

**Statement by His Excellency U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International
Cooperation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
at the Mid-Term Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement
(Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, 5-6 April 2018)**

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Jorge Arreaza Monstserrat, Minister of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for his able stewardship as the current Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the Government and the people of the Republic of Azerbaijan for hosting this Conference in this beautiful City of Baku as well as for their warm hospitality accorded to us. My delegation would like to associate itself with the Statement made by Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77.

We are gathered here today to further strengthen our solidarity and collective efforts to achieve our common goal of a world of peace, progress and prosperity for all in this new era of global uncertainty and instability. Today, we are confronting with the complex and changing international security environment and the daunting challenges in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda Goals.

Thus, we cannot agree more on the choice of the theme for the Conference "Promoting International Peace and Security for Sustainable Development. It is a timely reminder to all of us how the threat to peace and security is hindering sustainable development and vice versa.

I hardly need to stress the important nexus between peace and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. As the history of countless countries, including my own, illustrates, conflict and instability have had a lasting impact on a country's development. Without peace, there can be no sustainable development, no social justice. There can be no long-lasting peace without inclusive and sustainable development. Peace and development are two sides of the same coin.

Mr. Chairman,

It is of paramount importance for the Movement to maintain the unity and solidarity among its membership. The Movement must continue to work on consensus basis, speak with one voice and remain united as a group in addressing the major issues of concerns to all member States. As the main objective of our Movement is to promote and protect the interest of all membership, we must not encourage misuse of this forum for any act inimical to other fellow member States, that could undermine the unity and solidarity of the Movement. Any dispute among member states must be resolved bilaterally by a peaceful means.

We should not lose sight of the guiding principles and objectives of the Non-Aligned Movement, particularly respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations; refraining from the interference in the internal affairs of the countries; settlement of disputes by peaceful means; and refraining from acts of aggression or threats or the use of force against any country.

Myanmar was proud to be one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement and has faithfully adhered to those principles. After regaining its independence, Myanmar had all along pursued the foreign policy of positive neutrality and non-alignment, which was best suited for that time. Through this policy, we had been able to maintain friendly relations with all countries near and far including major powers at that time.

Given the emerging new world order and challenges of the new global security and economic landscapes, we firmly believe that the Movement remains relevant and valid today, as the defender of the developing world against the dominance of the rich and powerful in today's world system.

Mr. Chairman,

Myanmar has undergone remarkable changes and democratic transformation in recent years abandoning the half a century of military rule. For a country that has endured seven decades of internal armed conflicts, nothing is more important than peace and stability. Thus, the Government, since taking office two years ago, has put national reconciliation and peace at the top of its agenda.

The new President of Myanmar H.E. U Win Myint, who has just sworn last week, has once again reaffirmed that rule of law and socio-economic development as well as national reconciliation and peace will remain on top of its national priorities.

Recognizing peace as the prerequisite and enabler for the development, we have revitalized the peace process with numerous ethnic armed groups to end the world's longest running internal armed conflicts. A new milestone in the direction of peace was made last February when two more ethnic armed groups came on board to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire agreement (NCA) bringing the total number of signatories to ten and raising rays of hope for peace and development at least in the Southern border.

The two Union Peace Conferences held so far have also made some progress. Despite complexities and challenges, thirty-seven key principles were agreed upon for a future democratic federal union at the second session held in May last year. Dialogues are going on and the third session of the Conference is scheduled to be convened next month.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite numerous challenges facing Myanmar during its nascent democratic transition, the world's attention is focused mainly on the Rakhine State, due to incessant media reports portraying it as a religious issue. We fully share the concern over the plights of all affected communities which was in fact ignited by the coordinated attacks by ARSA terrorists against 30 border security posts. Many overlooked this fact and the sufferings, insecurity and fears of Rakhine and many other ethnic minorities. Massive displacements were caused not only by violence involved in the fight against terrorists but also by fear, intimidation and persuasion of the terror group.

In fact, the Rakhine problem is not an issue of religious discrimination as widely portrayed. But it is a political and economic issue involving illegal migration, resource competition, poverty, citizenship issue and lack of rule of law and national security. Myanmar is a multi-religious country where different faiths including majority of muslim population live in harmony in many parts of the country.

The Government is fully committed to find a sustainable solution that would lead to peace, stability and development for all communities within the State. The government's efforts including seeking advice of Dr. Kofi Annan Advisory Commission had been gaining momentum until 25 August 2017 when 30 police outposts were brutally attacked by ARSA.

It has changed the whole situation and perception of the international community on the situation in Myanmar.

We are also deeply concerned for all people affected, including those who have fled within or outside the country.

The Government has been implementing the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Commission by assigning to a Ministerial-level implementation committee and setting up an Advisory Board comprised of local and foreign eminent personalities. The Government has also set up Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD) mobilising funds and contributions of the public and private sectors and the people.

We have reached out to our friendly neighbour Bangladesh by sending a series of Ministerial delegations and special envoys to resolve the issue taking place along the porous border. Both countries are working bilaterally for early repatriation of the displaced people of Rakhine State through a joint working group following the signing of a number of agreements between the two countries since 23 November last year.

As safe and voluntary repatriation is an immediate priority, the Government has done necessary preparations for reception since 23 January. We have sent back a list of people, we were able to verify even though the forms we received from Bangladesh are not in conformity with the agreed prescribed form for repatriation. We are ready to receive them back any time.

The access to the affected areas has also been given to the Diplomatic Corps and UN agencies by organizing trips to Rakhine State. The domestic and international media based in Myanmar had also been given access to Rakhine State in order to have first-hand knowledge about the ground situation and our readiness for the reparation process. We also have put in place an effective mechanism to deliver humanitarian assistance to all affected communities through Red Cross Movement and ASEAN Coordination Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), WFP and FAO.

The Government has invited the UNDP and UNHCR to jointly assist the Government's efforts in carrying out livelihood development for all communities in Rakhine State and for repatriation and resettlement of the displaced persons respectively. A draft MoU has been proposed to UNDP and UNHCR. We are hopeful that the MoU will be signed in the near future. Their presence will allay fears of the displaced persons to return.

The Government is committed to promote and protect the rights and responsibilities of all its peoples. With regard to reported human rights violations, allegations alone is not enough. I wish to reiterate our firm position that we will not condone any forms of misconduct and impunity and stands ready to take legal actions against any perpetrator if there is a clear evidence supporting the allegations.

The challenges in Rakhine State must be seen in a broader dimension including protecting human rights and security of all communities as well as addressing their fears and providing long-neglected assistance for development.

We believe that the members of the Movement will take a more positive approach by helping Myanmar to resolve the issue, rather than focusing on criticism, condemnation and hate narratives. Mishandling of the issue could trigger chaos, instability and tamper social harmony in the multi-religious country. It could even undermine the ongoing democratization process which we want to see succeed. We must focus on resolving, not inflaming the situation and on helping us in bringing the communities together instead of driving them further apart.

Mr. Chairman,

Before concluding, I wish to emphasize that the current world order is replete with unfairness, injustice and inequalities. Imbalances in global economic and resource management have exacerbated the development gap between rich and poor. Climate change have impacted heavily on the developing world's efforts for sustainable development. The monopolisation of the news media by the rich and powerful, unbalanced reporting and spread of fake news could negatively influence policy decisions to the peril of less developed or weaker members of the Movement whose views and narratives are faced with suppression.

In the face of those global challenges, the Movement must remain united to effectively address the issues of concern. The Movement's members comprising of almost all third-world countries has the strength of nearly two-thirds of the United Nations members accounting for 55 per cent of world population. If we stand united, we will no doubt be stronger. We should therefore strengthen our efforts based on the cardinal principles of the Movement to play a bigger role in maintaining international peace and security and achieving sustainable development.

It is imperative that we must work together in unity and solidarity to strengthen the Movement, to shape a more equitable and better world in order to realize lasting peace, social justice and to achieve sustainable development.

Together and united, we can make it happen.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.
