MYANMAR

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Statement by

H.E. U Hau Do Suan, Ambassador/ Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to United Nations at the Plenary Meeting on the Culture of Peace

United Nations, New York

(8 December 2017)

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Mr. President,

First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you for convening this important session.

My delegation also thanks the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports under the Agenda this item 15.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Mr. President,

Building peace is the most cherished efforts that the people of Myanmar are undertaking today. The 21st Century Panglong peace conference is being held to forge a lasting peace. We believe in culture of dialogue to reconcile differences, to build trust and confidence and to pursue a lasting peace. After almost seven decades of fraternal strife, the ethnic armed groups, the Armed Forces, political parties and the Government all have agreed to come together around the negotiating table to pave the way to peace, national reconciliation and a democratic federal union.

We have known, through our own national experience that the road to peace has never been an easy path to thread. But, this is the only way that will lead the people of Myanmar to their long-held aspiration of a peaceful and prosperous nation.

In the quest for peace through dialogue, it requires vision, political will, mutual respect and trust among dialogue partners, courage and the spirit of cooperation and accommodation. We have launched this ambitious national peace process with the Spirit of Panglong which is based on the principles of unity, equality, justice and peace for all ethnic nationals of the Union.

Religious harmony and tolerance of cultural diversity are crucial for sustaining peace and development in increasingly globalized and heavily interdependent world. Myanmar is a land of over a hundred different ethnic national races with their own cultural identities and languages. It is also a multi-religious country where all four major religions thrive with all their faithful living in peace and harmony. Freedom of religion and the right to preserve cultural identity and heritage have been guaranteed by the Constitution.

His Holiness Pope Francis paid an official visit to Myanmar last month. It is also the first ever Papal visit to Myanmar in 500 years of Catholic mission in Myanmar. The

historic visit took place within a few months after Myanmar and the Holy See establish diplomatic relations. The visit is yet another testimony of religious tolerance and freedom of faiths in a country where overwhelming majority of the population profess Buddhism.

Mr. President,

Myanmar is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. It is home to 135 officially recognized ethnic groups, each with its own distinctive culture and adherence to different faiths. Out of the total population of 51 million, 89.89 percent are Buddhists, 6.31 percent Christians, 2.2 percent Muslims and 0.5 percent profess Hinduism.

To promote religious harmony and peace among different communities, we have established Interfaith Friendship Group at national level representing all religions, i.e. Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. There are 127 interfaith friendships sub groups across the country. In 2017 alone, 112 interfaith dialogues, awareness talks and combined prayers services have been held all over the country for peace and national reconciliation.

Mr. President,

Intolerance and religious extremism is most harmful to sustaining peace and harmony in a diverse society. Myanmar strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The terrorist attack on 25 August against Myanmar security forces in northern Rakhine this year, carried out by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), has triggered tragic humanitarian problem. The terrorist atrocities claimed many innocent civilian lives killing men women and children, old people of different communities, including Buddhist, Muslims, and Hindus, being horrifically killed by ARSA.

Today we are witnessing surging intolerance, hatreds, and terrorist activities in many parts of the world. Myanmar condemns any act of terrorism, violent extremism, incitement of religious hatred and hostility in any society, anywhere.

Mr. President

Peace is not a given gift. Many lives have been sacrificed in the name of peace throughout human history. However, it is a reward that comes after sincere efforts by all those concerned. We all must work together to build a global culture of peace through compassion, tolerance and an inclusive society leaving no one behind.

I thank you.

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