Right of Reply by H.E. Mr. Hau Do Suan, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations, at the General Debate of the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly

(New York, 25 September 2017)

Mr President,

My delegation has asked for the floor to exercise our right of reply to the irresponsible remarks made by some delegations with regard to my country during the course of the General Debate in the last few days.

It is deeply regrettable that unsubstantiated allegations have been repeated in these chambers likening the situation in Rakhine State to "ethnic cleansing". Nothing is further from the truth.

Terms such as "atrocities", "ethnic cleansing", and "genocide" must not be used lightly. The use of such terms should be considered only after there is solid evidence. "Atrocities", "ethnic cleansing", and "genocide" are very serious charges that required legal review and judicial determination. They should not be bandied about and used loosely.

Myanmar objects in the strongest terms the use of such words as atrocities and ethnic cleansing by the delegations concerned in their statements in reference to the situation in Myanmar. I would like to urge these delegations and the international community as well to see the situation in northern Rakhine objectively and in an unbiased manner.

Let me be clear. There is no ethnic cleansing. There is no genocide. The leaders of Myanmar who have long been striving for freedom and human rights will not espouse such policies. We will do everything to prevent ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Mr. President,

The issue of Rakhine State is extremely complex. I will not dwell on the details since our Vice-President has already addressed the issue at length on 20 September 2017.

It is the responsibility of every government to fight against terrorism and to protect innocent civilians. We condemn all human rights violations and violent acts. As you are aware, within hours of the release of the report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, a series of coordinated attacks were carried out on 30 police outposts in Northern Rakhine State on 25 August. The so-called Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) has claimed responsibility for the attacks. The Government of Myanmar subsequently declared ARSA as a terrorist group. The highest Islamic organization in Myanmar, All Myanmar Islamic Religious Organization has also issued a statement early condemning the terrorist attacks in Rakhine State.

These vicious attacks have resulted in the loss of life and property and displacement of peoples.

Those who have had to abandon their hearth and home are many – not just Muslim and Rakhine, but also small minority groups such as Daingnet, Mro, Thet, Mramagyi and Hindus. Most of the world has been unaware of the existence and plight of these small groups.

In the affected area of northern Rakhine, Muslim community is not a minority as widely reported. In reality, they are a majority as their population has increased. They now constitute 95% of the total population in the area.

Whence the threat to peace and stability?

The evil nature of the ARSA terrorist group has once again been revealed yesterday. A mass grave of 28 Hindu villagers including women and children, who were cruelly and brutally killed by the ARSA, was discovered by the authorities

yesterday. Today, another 17 bodies have been unearthed. They are among the 93 Hindu villagers who have been reported missing since the attacks on 25 August.

When it comes to terrorism, there can be no choices. The world cannot condone terrorism in any form or manifestation for whatever reason. We must stand together to remove the scourge of terrorism.

Mr. President,

What of the **exodus**? You may ask.

There are several reasons for the exodus.

Prominent among them is the fear factor. Following the terrorist attacks and the security operation, most of the women and children were forced to flee. The men were conscripted to join the ARSA in fighting the security forces. Many villages had been intimidated to flee to Bangladesh side so that they can attract international attention.

The scotched-earth policy employed by the terrorists is another factor.

Seeds of terror were meticulously sown long before the attack. Villagers who were considered to be collaborating with the government were brutally murdered. The terrorists planted IEDs everywhere, blew up bridges and committed arson.

The Government is striving to restore normalcy. The situation has improved. Since 5 September, there have been no armed clashes.

Mr. President,

At present, humanitarian assistance is our top priority. We are committed to ensuring that aid is received by all those in need, without discrimination. We have already dedicated significant national funds and resources to humanitarian relief operations. Relief aid and assistance is provided immediately after the attacks.

Now more effective measures are being put in place by the Government. A new government-led mechanism, established in cooperation with the Red Cross Movement has also started its humanitarian assistance to all those displaced inhabitants.

We are also discussing with our fellow ASEAN countries the possibility to utilize the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) Centre to provide much needed humanitarian assistance to all affected communities in Rakhine State.

Mr. President,

The Government Myanmar is fully committed to solving the issue of Rakhine State. The recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State provide us with a clear roadmap. Recently formed ministerial level Implementation Committee has already begun its work.

On 22 September 2017, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with the Committee and set out the immediate tasks.

I would like to reiterate that the refugees who had fled to Bangladesh would be repatriated to Myanmar based on the experience of 1993. A working group for verification will be set up expeditiously to conduct systematic verification process.

The Government is organizing a visit for the diplomatic corps to the affected areas in the northern Rakhine State on 28 September in Myanmar so that they will have the opportunity to witness the firsthand situation on the ground.

We are also reaching out to Bangladesh side to find the way to solve the problem of refugees.

I thank you, Mr. President.

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