

Statement by His Excellency U Thaug Tun, National Security Advisor to the Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar at the ARRIA Formula Meeting of the Security Council on the Situation in Myanmar Co-hosted by France and the United Kingdom

(13 October 2017)

Mr. President.

I would like to join other speakers in thanking H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan for his comprehensive briefing.

Over the past 12 months, he has worked tirelessly to try to cut the Gordian knot in Rakhine State. He and members of his commission have consulted widely with all stake-holders in the country, the region and beyond to find the best path to sustainable peace and development in the state.

Mr. Annan's briefing today is based on firsthand information and thorough research. It stands in stark contrast to the less than objective statements that we have repeatedly heard.

It reflects his deep insight on the complex and challenging situation of Rakhine, the reason why it has become the subject of international focus, and the most constructive way to move forward.

The challenges that Myanmar faces are legion. They have been further complicated by recent events.

As underlined by Mr. Annan, these challenges cannot be overcome overnight and by Myanmar alone. Myanmar's efforts must be buttressed by understanding and support of the international community.

The government of Myanmar firmly believes that the recommendations of the Commission provide us with a viable roadmap to lasting peace in Rakhine State.

We have embraced the final report of the Commission.

A Ministerial-level committee has been set up to ensure that the recommendations are implemented expeditiously.

Work has begun.

An Advisory Board composed of eminent persons and experts from home and abroad will also be constituted to advise the Committee. It is our hope that inclusion of experts from abroad will contribute to finding a way forward.

Even as we grapple with the Rakhine issue, we are conscious of the need to address the political, economic and social challenges we face in the rest of the country.

The task is Herculean.

There is a need for the international community to understand the situation and support the sustainability of our democratization process.

We consider our relations with the United Nations important and we will continue to nurture the relationship. The UN Under Secretary General Jeffrey Feltman is currently visiting Myanmar. He will have the opportunity to visit Rakhine and see firsthand the situation on the ground. We have also extended an invitation to the UN Secretary General and look forward to welcoming him in the near future.

As a responsible member of the international community, Myanmar will implement all its commitments without fail.

This was affirmed yesterday by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in her address to the nation, committing to the development of Rakhine State.

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.
4. A new mechanism, the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine, chaired by the State Counsellor herself, has been established.

It is a partnership among the government, people, private sector, local non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, development partners, UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations.

The work program will begin on 15 October.

Here, I can do no better than to reiterate what the State Counsellor stressed yesterday. We will answer the call of the international community with deeds and actions rather than words.

Mr. President,

Before I conclude, I would like to assuage the concerns expressed by the members of Security Council when we last met.

First, with regard to violence, I would like to reaffirm that violence has subsided in northern Rakhine and operations by security forces have ceased since 5 September.

In light of the improved security situation, the diplomatic corps in Yangon accompanied by the media were able to visit the affected areas in Northern Rakhine on 2 October. Subsequently, a delegation of Myanmar Ministers and diplomats from five neighboring countries: Bangladesh, China, India, Laos, Thailand, visited the border areas between Myanmar and Bangladesh on 10 October.

Second, humanitarian assistance is being provided to all affected communities without discrimination. Myanmar government is partnering the Red Cross Movement to distribute the aid. With the participation of WFP, FAO, ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management and private donors, more aid is expected to flow to the displaced communities in the coming days.

Third, bilateral talks between Myanmar and Bangladesh regarding repatriation have been initiated. The Minister for the State Counsellor's Office visited Dhaka from 1 to 3 October. Both sides have agreed to form a Joint Working Group on repatriation process. The Foreign Minister and Home Minister of Bangladesh have been invited to Nay Pyi Taw to continue the dialogue.

Fourth, Myanmar shares the view of the international community that the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine provide a viable road map.

Fifth, with regard to accountability, let me reaffirm that we stand for the rule of law. No one is above the law. Where there is clear evidence, those who breach the law will be brought to justice.

Mr. President,

The government of Myanmar has been accused of indifference to the plight of the people in Rakhine. Far from ignoring the situation, the government has made it a priority to find a sustainable solution to problems which have existed for decades. We feel deeply for the suffering and plight of the innocents who have been displaced from their homes.

While we all feel sympathy for those who have had to flee their homes and seek shelter elsewhere, we cannot ignore the fact that there are different narratives on what transpired in northern Rakhine State. We must winnow "the wheat from the chaff."

Myanmar is committed to finding a way forward in Rakhine and in the rest of the country. As a fledgling democracy, we are aware that the road ahead will be long. We are resolved to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Thank you.