

**Statement delivered by H.E. Dr. Win Myat Aye,  
Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement  
Sixty-eight Session of Executive Committee of  
the High Commissioner's Programme (ExCom)  
2 – 6 October 2017, Geneva**

Madam Chair,

Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,  
Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

It is my honor to be invited to the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. First and foremost, I would like to reassure everyone that Myanmar government has devoted our utmost commitment to democratic transition, peace and stability and development for all of our citizens. The new democratically-elected government is committed to carry out its political agenda in which a special emphasis on building peace and national reconciliation as the top priority. Meanwhile, we also pay a special attention to the socio-economic development of poverty-stricken areas, particularly where internal peace building is necessary. As a minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Ministry of Myanmar and in accordance with the Disaster Management law, I'm here to brief the situation in Rakhine State which draw tremendous international attention recently.

As for the situation in Rakhine State, even before the recent terror attacks, our government had established a Central Committee for Implementation of Peace and Development in Rakhine. We also invited Dr. Kofi Annan to lead a Commission that would help us to resolve the longstanding tension between Rakhine and Muslim communities in Rakhine State. However, right after the implementation process for Annan Commission's recommendations was announced, Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, shortly known as ARSA, attacked thirty police outposts on 25 August, a day before the final report of Annan Commission was made public, and killed and injured several security personnel. Numbers of

displaced persons, including Muslims, Hindus and other Rakhine ethnic minorities, had left their homes because of the security concerns.

Since then our security forces have been conducting security operations under strict Code of Conduct to avoid collateral damage and the harming of innocent civilians. After the terrorist attack broke out on 25 August, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement has provided humanitarian assistance to all communities who have been displaced in Rakhine State. A field visit to encourage and support the victims of violent attacks was led by myself, chief minister of Rakhine State and other regional government officials on 27 August.

However, efficiency of our stabilization effort has been compromised due the complex nature of this issue. Decades old tension between two local communities is magnified into national security threat because of the involvement of terror organizations. Handling the current situation requires not only the humanitarian perspective but also the considerations from security and political angles. In order to consult with international partners who have deep understanding of the situation, Ministry of the Office of the State Counselor held a coordination meeting on 4 September with development partners represented by Ambassadors of United Kingdom, United States, Denmark and the Charge d'Affaires of the Australian Embassy, the Charge d'Affaires of the Delegation of the European Union and the UN Resident Representative, as well as representatives from the Red Cross Movement, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and the Myanmar Red Cross Society.

Although security situation has improved in the affected areas and no more armed clashed since 5 September, much needs to be done to consolidate the stability in the region. To ensure long lasting peace, harmony and development in the Rakhine State beyond the current incident, the Myanmar President's Office issued a presidential decree on 12 September to form the "Committee for Implementing Recommendations on Rakhine State". It is chaired by myself with having Chief Minister for Rakhine State as co-chair and comprised of 16 other Deputy Ministers and Permanent Secretaries. The committee is focused not just to stop the crisis immediately but also to nurture a harmonious living between two communities by implementing the recommendations by Annan Commission.

Giving preferential treatment to one group in terms of providing humanitarian assistance or media advocacy could worsen the sentiment of the other group. That would make our job to implement the recommendations harder and further deteriorate the overall situation. That's why we have to make sure all communities affected by this crisis receive equal assistance without any form of discrimination.

Our next immediate priority is to bring back the refugees who have fled to Bangladesh. Repatriation process can start any time for those who wish to return to Myanmar. Verification of refugees will be based on the agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh Governments in 1993. Those who have been verified as refugees from this country will be accepted without any problems and with full assurance of their security and their access to humanitarian aid. They will be provided education and healthcare services without discrimination. Given the scale of exodus, repatriation of these refugees is no small task by any means. But we will try to carry out this operation with our maximum capabilities, together with assistance from partner organizations who wish to help not only a particular interest group but to all of our citizens within the border of the State who are affected by this incident.

Thank you.