



Union Minister for International Cooperation participated at the High-Level Segment of the 37th Session of the Human Rights Council held in Geneva

The Myanmar delegation led by U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation arrived back Yangon on 3 March after attending the High-Level Segment of the 37th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council held from 26 to 28 February 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland.

At the High-Level Segment of the Human Rights Council held on 27 February, Union Minister U Kyaw Tin delivered a Statement apprising the meeting of the complexities of Myanmar's democratic transition and the situation in Rakhine State. In his statement, the Union Minister mentioned that despite many daunting challenges facing Myanmar, the international community focused most on the situation in Rakhine State, as the media incessantly portrays it as a religious issue. In fact, the Rakhine issue is not a religious one but a political and economic challenge involving migration, competition over limited resources, poverty and rule of law. But it has recently evolved from the communal conflict into the issues of national security and terrorism. State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has taken immediate proactive steps including setting up of Dr. Kofi Annan Advisory Commission to resolve the complex issue of Rakhine State soon after taking office. The government's efforts are gaining momentum with the international community responding positively when the armed attacks against three police outposts occurred in early October 2016 and changed the situation completely. Again on 25 August 2017, within hours after the release of the final report of Dr. Kofi Annan Advisory Commission, the so-called 'ARSA' launched

orchestrated attacks on 30 police outposts and the Regimental Headquarters leaving multiple deaths and injuries on security personnel and civilians. The security forces have no choice but to suppress terrorism and to restore law and order and protect the innocents. Muslim population in affected areas of Rakhine State crossed the border out of fear of conflict and violence. However, many Muslim villages remained intact. Little is known or reported in the media about many people of Daingnet, Mro, the Mramagyi and Rakhine minority groups and Hindus who have had to flee their homes as a result of violence. Instigation, threats and false hopes given by ARSA also play a role in the mass displacement of people. As the International Crisis Group (ICG) reported, ARSA attacks were intended as a provocation. It was those terrorist attacks that triggered humanitarian crisis. Yet, many conveniently failed to denounce provocative attacks. Any form of terrorist act for whatever cause should not be condoned.

The Union Minister added that as Myanmar government is giving priority for the repatriation of the displaced people, significant progress has been made in the preparation process. Humanitarian assistance has been provided to all affected communities through Red Cross Movement and ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Center). FAO and WFP have also joined in this effort. The government is making progress in implementing the recommendations of Dr. Kofi Annan Commission as a road map, the Ministerial Committee assigned to this task has recently issued its first progress report to the public. With a view to granting more access, Myanmar government has organized day-trips to Rakhine State in three groups for all diplomatic corps including UN agencies to see for themselves the ground situation and its readiness for repatriation. Myanmar government recently invited UNHCR and UNDP 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.

The Union Minister then stressed that in suppressing the terrorists who used civilian recruits, it might cause collateral damage and civilian casualties. With regard to alleged human rights violations, the government shall never condone impunity and action will be taken against any perpetrators in accordance with the law if there is concrete evidence. Myanmar strongly objects the use of such words as ethnic cleansing and genocide in reference to the situation in Rakhine State. Myanmar would welcome the international community to play a constructive role in relation to Rakhine State and sought their understanding on the complexity and their support for the government efforts in finding a durable solution. Taking non-constructive measures would be counterproductive, as it will further polarize the communities and undermining the efforts for the long-term objective of reconciliation. The Union Minister concluded by stressing that Myanmar is facing the most challenging time in its history of transition, but the government will turn the challenges into opportunities for national reconciliation and peace leading to further strengthening democracy and expressed its belief that the success of democratic transition will overcome these challenges.

While in Geneva on 26th February, the Union Minister also attended the High-Level Segment of the Committee on Disarmament and delivered a statement sharing Myanmar's views on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

On 27th February, Union Minister U Kyaw Tin, accompanied by Permanent Representative to the UN / Ambassador U Htin Lynn, met with Mr. Manabu Horii, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the UK at the United Nations separately. During the meetings, the Union Minister explained the government's efforts to resolve the situation in Rakhine State. The Union Minister also held a meeting with Mr. Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), and exchanged views on strengthening of ICRC's assistance on Myanmar government's humanitarian efforts.

On 28 February, Union Minister U Kyaw Tin and Mr. Johannes Matyassy Assistant Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation held the 2nd Meeting of Myanmar-Switzerland Foreign Office Consultations in Bern. During the meeting, matters pertaining to the bilateral, political and economic cooperation, promotion of cooperation projects under the new cooperation strategy of Switzerland on Myanmar (2019-2023), Switzerland's enhanced engagement with ASEAN as well as providing humanitarian assistance and repatriation and development in Rakhine State.
