

Right of Reply by H.E. Mr. Han Thu, Ambassador of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar at the General Policy Debate of 202nd Session of Executive Board, UNESCO (UNESCO Headquarters, 10 October 2017)

Mr. Chair,

My delegation has requested to take the floor to exercise our right of reply to the statement made by the distinguished representative of Bangladesh with regard to the displaced people in Bangladesh.

Mr. Chair,

It is utmost importance to underline that the recent round of violence was carried out by the so called ARSA extremist terrorist group on 30 police outposts in Northern Rakhine State in the early hours of 25 August 2017. The terrorist attacks were aimed to undermine the Government efforts to find the lasting solution in Rakhine since the series of terrorist attacks took place just after the release of the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine headed by the former UN Secretary General, Dr. Kofi Annan.

The highest Islamic organization in Myanmar namely All Myanmar Islamic Religious Organization also condemned the terrorist attacks in Rakhine and have pledged collaboration with the government to help to restore peace.

The latest round of violence poses a serious security risk for Myanmar. In light of these terrorist attacks, the security forces carried out the area clearance operation with maximum restraint to avoid any collateral damage. I also wish to take this opportunity to inform that there have been no armed clashes since 5th September 2017 and no clearance operations.

The recent violent attacks show that the terrorists are not only targeting the security personnel but also killing the innocent civilian population. Many people in the affected area, mostly women and children, were forced to flee due to the fear of brutal violence carried out by the ARSA terrorist group. The men were forced to join the ARSA in fighting the security forces and many villages had been intimidated to flee to Bangladesh side to attract the international attention.

Mr. Chair,

There has been a growing clamour for repatriation of refugees who have fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Myanmar is prepared to start the verification process at any time. Our two neighbors have had the experience of such a process in 1993.

The Myanmar delegation led by the Union Minister for the office of the State Counsellor visited Dhaka, Bangladesh from 1st of 3rd October 2017. During the visit, the Union Minister called on the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh and the two ministers exchanged views on how to

resolve the issue of repatriation. The Union Minister also invited the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh to Naypyitaw, Myanmar for further discussions. The high-level official visit to Bangladesh expressed the Myanmar's Government commitment to solve the issue amicably by promoting engagement between the two countries.

Myanmar fully shares the concerns of international community regarding the displacement and the people who were affected by the latest round of violence. Therefore, the priority of the government is to provide aid and assistance and the government is committed to ensure that all the aid must be received by all communities in need, without discrimination. The government is providing the humanitarian assistance to all those displaced inhabitants in cooperation with Red Cross Movement and other donor countries.

Mr. Chair

The new government in Myanmar inherited a challenging situation in Rakhine State and has had to deal with the consequences of actions by other actors. At this critical juncture in the life of our young democracy, it is imperative that the international community join hands with us to ensure that democracy takes firm root and that we will succeed in carry out our responsibility to establish peace, stability, and development in Rakhine and in the whole of Myanmar.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.
