

**Opening remarks by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator ai Knut Ostby  
Government-organized workshop on national strategy for the closure of IDP camps  
Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar  
29 November 2018**

**Excellency Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Win Myat Aye, ladies and gentlemen,**

Thank you for holding this important second workshop on a national strategy for the sustainable closure of IDP camps in Myanmar.

I commend the government for continuing to consider durable solutions for IDPs a priority policy area. This challenge requires a comprehensive national strategy and adequate implementation mechanisms.

At present, we believe that over 230,000 people are living in 188 displacement camps across Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States. Some communities have been forced to live in overcrowded camps for more than 6 years.

They face a range of health, psycho-social and protection risks. Women and children are especially vulnerable. The restrictions on movement and the lack of livelihoods opportunities mean that IDPs depend on international humanitarian assistance.

Addressing a humanitarian and human rights crisis on this scale would be a challenge for any government. But, there are solutions and we at UN are truly committed to supporting you in their formulation and implementation.

This meeting can be the platform for finding a mutual understanding how we could collaborate on IDPs return or resettlement and camps closure. Allow me please to bring to your attention several constructive proposals from my note to the government from 24 September 2018.

These proposals are anchored in international best practices and the Global Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (OCHA, 2004).

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The first suggestion calls for granting freedom of movement to all displaced people, including the Rohingya and other Muslims in Rakhine who currently suffer the most restrictions. They must be able to move freely to fulfill their potential and to build a future for their families. This is critical for creating the conditions under which they will be able to contribute to reconciliation and peace.

The second suggestion calls for the engagement of the displaced people in the decision making about their return or resettlement. The decision on where and when they want to return or resettle must rest with the displaced people in the camps. They must be the authors of their own future.

At the same time, the mutual fear among communities must be addressed through structured dialogue between the Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and other involved communities. A protracted lack of engagement between communities could only further exacerbate mutual suspicions and fear.

Third, the displaced populations need to be allowed first and foremost to return home, or to another place of their choosing. Such locations must be safe and suitable for habitation. They should offer access to non-segregated employment, education, health care and other public services.

Let me reiterate that ensuring safety and security will be a key element of a successful return or resettlement. We can achieve that through building confidence, trust and social cohesion. These measures would lay the foundation for the voluntary, safe and sustainable return or resettlement of the 230,000 IDPs in 188 camps.

This would lead to the closure of the camps in a way that would contribute to sustainable peace, stability and development. In addition to the mentioned principles, the strategic plan will have to address regional specifics. In Kachin and Shan States, current security conditions are not yet conducive to large-scale solutions for displaced people.

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However, when the conditions will be right, we can build on our joint experience with the resettlement of around 1,000 families. This gives us a framework for future collaboration.

In Rakhine State, our cooperation should contribute to the implementation of the recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission. As I stated in the workshop organized by the Committee for the Implementation of the Recommendations on 13 August 2018: “Our intent is to provide the Government with adequate support to succeed in carrying out all the Recommendations.”

We remain prepared to provide the necessary technical, humanitarian and development assistance -- benefiting all communities, irrespective of ethnicity, religion or citizenship status.

**Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,**

Sustainable solutions for the IDPs and camps closure require complex planning and implementation. Its successful completion will take more than infrastructure development and improvement.

It will take political will to address sensitive issues at the core of the conflicts which cause displacement. I thank the government for preparing the draft of the strategy and inviting us to discuss its contents. We look forward to today's constructive dialogue.

Let us make this workshop a step forward in our cooperation towards sustainable solutions for IDPs.

Thank you for your attention.

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