

Statement Attributable to the Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Myanmar

The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General (SESG), Christine Schraner Burgener, undertook her third visit to Myanmar from 10 to 20 October where she held consultations with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, other government and military leaders, ethnic armed organizations, local and religious leaders, NGOs, UN agencies and the diplomatic community. Accountability is one of two important pillars for national reconciliation, the other is inclusive dialogue, she said repeatedly. Credible fact-finding is the first step towards accountability. In Rakhine and Kachin states, the SESG also engaged with local civilian and military authorities, and directly with the affected populations, in particular women.

In Rakhine state, the SESG went to several IDP camps and relocation sites in Kyauktaw, Buthidaung, Maungdaw and Sittwe, to gauge progress made since her first visit in June. Noting that the implementation of the MoU between Myanmar, UNHCR and UNDP had begun, she stressed the urgent need for complete access and assessment throughout northern and central Rakhine. She saw that efforts had been made to provide more learning facilities in IDP camps and encouraged counterparts to continue providing greater access on joint education opportunities. The SESG also underlined the need for dignified and durable solutions to end displacement in line with the recommendations of the Advisory Commission. Closing the IDP camps is not enough. The IDPs full human rights need to be respected: starting with equal access to education and health, and freedom of movement. They have to be able to live in safety and security. This will be the most positive incentive for the refugees in Bangladesh to return. Knowing that the UN and its partners are present at their places of return, will give the returnees confidence and trust in the process. She also emphasized the need for greater domestic and foreign investment in the region, one of Myanmar's poorest which urgently requires inclusive development.

In Kachin state, the SESG also engaged with IDPs in camps around Myitkyina, some of whom have been displaced since 2011 without job prospects or hope of returning to their places of origin, due to land-mines and lack of security. She took note of the increasingly limited humanitarian access which affected the availability of medical assistance and aid. The SESG encouraged all stakeholders concerned to find constructive solutions for the benefit of the suffering civilians, especially the women and children. Ultimately, only peace and a genuine political dialogue can address these problems.

On the occasion of the third anniversary of the signing of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, the SESG expressed her deep concern about the intensified fighting in the North. She acknowledged the efforts made by the Government to start informal negotiations at the decision-making level with the signatory ethnic armed organisations. The SESG stressed the need for patience and more trust-building and offered to serve as a bridge. She called for greater inclusiveness and underlined her readiness to engage closely with all stakeholders in helping advance the peace process towards a homegrown solution.

The SESG exchanged views on Myanmar's democratic transition, including on freedom of the press and rule of law. In order to further peaceful co-existence, which needs time, she urged the Union government to undertake a public Zero Tolerance for Discrimination campaign at the highest level. Appreciating the willingness of the Myanmar authorities to engage with her closely, she will continue to focus her efforts on strengthening engagement between Myanmar and the international community towards a more tolerant, democratic and inclusive society that recognizes diversity as an asset.

Yangon, 20 October 2018