



Note to Correspondents: First Official Visit of the United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar

United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener conducted her first official visit to Myanmar from 12 to 21 June. In Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Rakhine state, she met among others with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat, Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Mahn Win Khine Than, Minister in the State Counsellor's Office U Kyaw Tint Swe, Chair of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission Thura Shwe Mann, Chairman of the Election Commission U Hla Thein, the Rakhine State Government including Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, conflict-affected communities and families in Rakhine state, the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), people currently displaced along the international border between Myanmar and Bangladesh, representatives of Myanmar's civil society, members of women associations, as well as with the United Nations country team, the diplomatic community and international NGOs. In all meetings, she stressed the need for inclusive solutions that integrated the views and important voices of women. The Special Envoy expresses her sincere appreciation to the Government of Myanmar and other interlocutors for their warm welcome and excellent organization of her visit. She also thanks the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and the United Nations country team for their support.

In this first visit, the Special Envoy focused on listening to all sides to better understand their diverse perspectives with a view to building trust and confidence among various stakeholders, and establishing positive relations while promoting the key principles of the United Nations. She stressed the importance of taking stock of the recent positive steps taken by the Government of Myanmar, and held constructive discussions with all interlocutors, focusing on the situation in Rakhine state, the need for credible fact-finding, democratization and elections, and the peace process, including the implementation of the Nationwide Ceasefire Accord. She underlined the readiness of the United Nations to strengthen its support to Myanmar in line with the values of the Organisation, including promotion and protection of human rights. All interlocutors expressed their wish for peace and development in Myanmar, and shared their frank assessment of the challenges that they were facing. They conveyed their willingness to work closely with the Special Envoy and the United Nations. The Special Envoy emphasized that she would aim to serve as a bridge between the United Nations and Myanmar, as well as between the different stakeholders, and help formulate solutions that could draw on the comparative experiences and expertise of the Organisation.

In all discussions, the Special Envoy underlined the importance of accountability, which she highlighted was essential for genuine reconciliation. She urged for credible fact-finding measures, and highlighted the readiness on the part of the United Nations and the international community to cooperate in this regard.



The Special Envoy recognized recent positive steps on Rakhine state, in particular the signing on 6 June 2018 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Myanmar, UNDP and UNHCR. While noting the complexities of the situation on the ground, she expressed the hope that current efforts aimed at addressing the root causes, including through the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State - in particular ending restrictions on freedom of movement and granting citizenship to those eligible - would soon lead to an environment that would be conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of the IDPs and refugees to their place of origin or choice. She also expressed her support to the implementation of the 23 November 2017 MoU between Bangladesh and Myanmar. The Special Envoy plans to travel soon to Bangladesh, where she intends to visit the refugee camps.

The Special Envoy visited IDP camps outside Sittwe and Maungdaw, as well as those currently displaced along the international border area between Myanmar and Bangladesh. These field visits underlined the urgent need for freedom of movement, socio-economic development, non-discriminatory rule of law and public safety not least in terms of addressing the fears and distrust among the communities in Rakhine State. In all places, she spoke to conflict-affected communities and victims, and was deeply touched by their personal stories, which underlined that the vicious cycle of violence needed to end. Towards this end, the Special Envoy reiterates the importance of condemning incitement to racial hatred and violence, and to take all measures to defuse tensions between the communities. Reiterating the Secretary-General's previous call, she suggested that in addition to the ongoing efforts to rebuild the destroyed infrastructure and to prepare suitable conditions for the return of the displaced, public meetings between the affected communities and the authorities would go a long way to encourage reconciliation and healing.

The Special Envoy engaged in substantive discussions on the peace process and highlighted her readiness to help build confidence and trust among the stakeholders. She added that the United Nations could help build positive momentum in terms of promoting an inclusive approach. Expressing concern about the intensifying violence in Kachin and Shan states as well as its impact on civilians, she looks forward to visiting these areas on a next visit. She responded positively to the willingness of the Government of Myanmar to include her in future peace talks.

The Special Envoy expresses her appreciation for the agreement of the Government of Myanmar to establishing her main supporting office in Nay Pyi Taw. Her travel plans include visits to Thailand, China and Bangladesh before her next consultations at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. She looks forward to continuing these discussions with the Government of Myanmar and other stakeholders.

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