Statement by Ambassador U Hau Do Suan,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
at the Security Council Briefing Session on Myanmar
(New York, 28 August 2018)

Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate you for chairing this important meeting and for the successful U.K. presidency of the Security Council.

Mr. President,

At the outset, please allow me to pay tribute to the late Dr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations who had contributed tremendously toward our efforts to find lasting solutions to the problems that were jeopardizing peace and progress in Rakhine State. When he took on the responsibility to lead the Rakhine Advisory Commission at the request of the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, he wanted Myanmar to succeed and reach its goals of peace, prosperity, security and progress for the country. The Commission’s recommendations are welcomed by all as important steps for lasting peace and development in Rakhine State. The people of Myanmar will always be grateful for his invaluable support and wise counsel in the country’s democratic transition. We should learn from his way of solving conflicts in a peaceful manner with a constructive and caring approach.

Mr. President,

Addressing the deep rooted and complex issues in Rakhine State was a fundamental and crucial part of Myanmar government’s efforts to building peace and national reconciliation in the country. In May 2016, within Just two months of taking on state responsibility, the Government established the Central Committee for Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development in Rakhine State. Soon after, on 5 September 2016, an Advisory Commission on Rakhine State headed by Dr. Kofi Annan was established. The Commission was mandated to examine the complex challenges facing Rakhine State and to propose responses to those challenges.
Barely a month later on 9 October 2016, a religious extremist terrorist group called **Aqa Mul Mujahidin** (later became Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army-**ARSA**) launched its first attack on three Border Police posts in northern Rakhine State. The attack was premeditated and well organized, causing death of 13 security personnel and other civilians. Their goal was clear to incite violence and attract international attention of the issue at the time when the whole world was welcoming our peaceful democratic transition.

The Advisory Commission submitted its interim report on 16 March 2017 which addressed some of the most urgent challenges facing the state including the immediate security concerns following October terrorist attack of police posts. The Government had made public endorsement of the report and its willingness to implement the recommendations.

On 24 August 2017, the Rakhine Advisory Commission presented its final report to the Government of Myanmar. The 88 recommendations aim at the establishment of lasting peace and stability in Rakhine. The challenges are daunting, multi-faceted and required multi-tasking. But, we welcomed the report and decided to carry on the task to implement the recommendations in good faith to the fullest extent, within the shortest timeframe possible, and consonant with the situation on the ground.

In the early hour of 25 August 2017, just a few hours after Mr. Kofi Annan handed his final report, ARSA launched premeditated, well planned and coordinated simultaneous armed attacks on 30 Border Guard posts and one army Battalion headquarters in northern Rakhine. The attacks caused death of dozens of security personnel as well as many innocent civilians. ARSA has also brutally killed over 250 non-Muslims ethnic minorities in northern Rakhine since October 2016. On 25 August 2017, ARSA massacred a hundred Hindus, which was well documented.

The ARSA attacks triggered predictable and logical response of Myanmar security forces to protect the life and property of every citizen, resulting in the subsequent mass displacement of people.

These are plain facts and nothing but the truth. But, these facts were conveniently discounted or ignored by mainstream media. The violence attacks were not coincidence.

ARSA terrorists and their foreign masterminds knew too well that the Myanmar security forces would respond their attack with full force. They must also
had anticipated exodus of people from northern Rakhine to Bangladesh. These events were well planned and executed with the support of foreign terrorist organizations.

The present grave humanitarian problem and the untold suffering of the innocent civilian people of all communities in Rakhine State were carefully calculated, instigated and created by ARSA. Their objective was to undermine Myanmar Government’s commitment and efforts to find lasting solution through the speedy implementation of the Commission’s recommendations and to elicit maximum international pressure on Myanmar to achieve their political goals.

Mr. President,

Our gathering here today could have been a different one had there been no terrorist attack. It could have been a happier occasion to stock taking the implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission or an international pledging conference to help poverty alleviation and socio-economic development of all communities in Rakhine.

The provocative terrorist attacks of October 2016 and August 2017 have affected the course of our earnest endeavour to build a peaceful, fair and prosperous future for the people of Rakhine. But, nothing shall stop our determination to continue our effort to achieve our objectives.

Mr. President,

We share deep sympathy and concern for all displaced persons, friends, especially women and children. We believe that we will able to solve the issue with our neighbor Bangladesh if we work together amicably in the spirit of good neighbourliness.

We have reached out to Bangladesh by sending ministerial delegations. We have invited Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mr. Mahmood Ali to Myanmar early this month. During his visit, the two sides agreed, among others, to deliver on commitment made, to speed up implementation of bilateral agreements on repatriation, and to set up a hotline between the two countries at the ministerial level.

Within two months between November 2017 and January 2018, we have signed 3 documents with Bangladesh to facilitate the repatriation of verified persons who crossed over to Bangladesh following the ARSA terrorist attacks in October 2016 and August 2017. According to the Agreement on physical arrangement for repatriation, the process of repatriation was scheduled to have commenced on 23 January 2018.
In line with these bilateral agreements, Myanmar made arrangements with momentum for the repatriation of verified displaced persons. We have been ready to receive the first batch of verified returnees since 23 January.

In February, Bangladesh has provided us with a list of 8032 people without signatures, finger prints and proper photograph, and more importantly, without the proper forms agreed by the two sides. Despite difficulties in verifying due to adequate information, we managed to verify 3952 as of 23 August 2018. We are also ready to receive a list of over 1200 verified Hindus and Muslims that we shared with Bangladesh. But we have yet to receive a single returnee despite our repeated request for their repatriation. We call on Bangladesh to fulfill its obligations in accordance with the bilateral agreements, to allow without delay, the return of verified persons who consented to return to Rakhine voluntarily.

Mr. President,

Another important issue is the systematic repatriation of displaced persons staying on the borderline. Since occupying the areas 150 feet from the international border line is unlawful, these people put themselves unwittingly in a situation that can affect stability of the two bordering countries. It is highly possible that the areas become an ARSA terrorist foothold. In this regard, we have requested Bangladesh authorities not to provide them any assistance from their side of the border, instead we are now arranging to provide humanitarian assistance for them from Myanmar side.

Moreover, the Government of Myanmar also signed an MoU with the UNDP and the UNHCR to assist speedy and efficient resettlement and rehabilitation of the returnees. We have already mapped out potential resettlement sites. On 7 August, UN officials have been granted access to 23 villages in 13 village tracts, selected for the first phase of assessment programme. An additional three village tracts have also been marked out for the resettlement of IDPs residing near the borderline. We urge the UN team to start the assessment programme as soon as possible.

Mr. President,

The Government continues to implement the recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission in earnest. 81 out of 88 recommendations have been implemented or under implementation. In the process of implementation, the Government attaches great importance to the advice and opinion of the Advisory Board chaired by Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand. The Advisory Board had submitted its final report on 16 August. The
report contained balanced and viable final recommendations which will certainly receive our serious consideration.

Mr. President,

We recognize the crucial role of the United Nations in addressing the issue of Rakhine and, the present humanitarian crisis in particular. We facilitated the visit of Security Council members and representative of neighbouring countries and the ASEAN chair in April this year. We welcomed appointment of Ambassador Christine Burgener as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. We believe that we could maintain a constructive and fruitful relationship with the Special Envoy. We have facilitated her to open her office in Nay Pyi Taw.

Mr. President,

Let me now turn to the question of accountability. The Government of Myanmar has made its position very clear that it will not condone any human rights abuse. Action will be taken against anyone if there is sufficient evidence. In this regard, the Government has established an Independent Commission of Enquiry, led by Ambassador Rosario Manalo, an eminent diplomat with rich experience in the field of human rights. The Commission also includes Ambassador Kenzo Oshima, another prominent diplomat, and two highly respected members of Myanmar.

The Commission is tasked to investigate allegations of human rights violations and related issues following the terrorist attacks with a view to seeking accountability and reconciliation, and to formulate recommendations on steps to be taken to ensure peace and stability in Rakhine State. The Commission will submit its report to the President of Myanmar within a year, including its recommendations prepared on the basis of the outcomes of its investigation.

In discharging its mandate, the Commission will apply particularly the 1950 Investigation Committee Act which gives the Commission necessary authority to investigate. The Commission will also avail itself of international human rights law and international humanitarian law where applicable. The Government of Myanmar will provide protection to all those who are in contact with ICOE, particularly victims and witnesses. The Commission will conduct its mandate in the principles of independence, impartiality and objectivity. The members met for the first time on 15 August, and commences its work this week.

With regard to the allegation of atrocity crimes committed by Myanmar security forces as contained in the recent report of the Independent International Fact-Finding
Mission on Myanmar, I would like to reiterate that we did not accept the mandate of the Mission because we have our concern about the Mission’s impartiality.

Besides, I have serious doubt on the intention of the timing of the release of the report. The report which was scheduled only to be submitted to the HRC on September 18, was hastily released on the eve of this particular meeting of the Security Council. This action raises serious questions about objectivity, impartiality and sincerity of the Fact-Finding Mission.

Mr. President,

The challenges we are facing today in Rakhine State is formidable. However, the Government and people of Myanmar are united in our determination to achieve sustainable peace and development for all communities in Rakhine. We shall not let these challenges derail our ultimate goal of democratic nation building.

It will take time and patience to build trust and confidence among communities. We shall seek reconciliation but not retribution; compassion but not hatred; integration but not segregation.

While the primary responsibility to address the situation in Rakhine rests with the Government and people of Myanmar, objective, positive and constructive contribution and support of the international community is crucial for the success of Myanmar’s national efforts.

This is not the time for exploiting the plight of innocent people particularly women and children, from Rakhine for self interest and political grandstanding. This is the time to act, to show our genuine concern by taking practical steps. Let the first batch of verified people who have expressed their voluntary return, go back to their land. Let the first phase of assessment programme commence where access has been granted. Let’s not waste our time.

In conclusion,

I wish to express our sincere appreciations to all our friends who are helping us in various ways to resolve the challenges in Rakhine at this critical juncture of democratic transition.

We should make important policy decisions based on facts and full understanding of the issues at hand. We should view this complex issue from a broader perspective.
We shall continue to work in good faith with the United Nations and with all our friends near and far to end the suffering of the people of Rakhine and rebuild their land so that all shall enjoy the fruits of peace and prosperity in the land blessed with so much resources and potentials.

Thank you.

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