

Press Release

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and High level Myanmar Delegation met with representatives of displaced persons at Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

A High level Myanmar delegation led by U Myint Thu, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and ASEAN ERAT Team comprised of officials from the ASEAN Secretariat and the AHA Centre, paid an official visit to Bangladesh from 27 to 29 July 2019.

Myanmar delegation and ASEAN ERAT Team left Dhaka for Cox's Bazar by air on 27 July 2019 and met with some 50 displaced persons from various camps at the Office of Camp No. 4, Cox's Bazar.

Those present at the meeting were U Lwin Oo, Myanmar Ambassador to the Republic of Bangladesh, Mr. Md. Delwar Hossain, Director-General, South Asia Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, Mr. Manjural Karim Khan Chowdhury, Ambassador of Bangladesh to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Mr. Md. Abul Kalam, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner and responsible officials.

Permanent Secretary briefed the displaced persons on the preparations for the repatriation, including the construction of buildings, repatriation process at the Reception Centres and Transit Centre, prevalence of law and order, access to education and health, citizenship in line with the 1982 Citizenship Law, benefits of NVC Card, creation of job opportunities, and social cohesion among various communities, among others. ASEAN ERAT Team members also explained on the outcomes of the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA) conducted in Northern Rakhine State and possible areas of cooperation between Myanmar and ASEAN to support the repatriation process.

Permanent Secretary also handed over Factsheets on repatriation process, prepared in Myanmar and English languages, to Mr. Md. Abul Kalam, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner for distribution among the prospective returnees in the camps. Furthermore, he circulated among the displaced persons who were present at the meeting.

In the evening, Myanmar Repatriation Task Force held a meeting with Bangladesh counterparts in order to address the difficulties and challenges in the

verification process of displaced persons, particularly the need to comply with the agreed verification form.

On 28 July 2019, Myanmar delegation and ASEAN ERAT Team revisited the Office of Camp No. 4 and met again with the displaced persons from various camps in Cox's Bazar. They discussed issues focusing on the continued dialogue and engagement between the Myanmar delegation and ASEAN ERAT Team with the prospective returnees, citizenship, and the prevalence of peace and stability upon their return.

Permanent Secretary explicitly explained that 1982 Citizenship Law also contains the eligibility of naturalized citizenship, and the decision to return should be made by their own volition without fear or favour.

Myanmar delegation and ASEAN ERAT Team then visited the Front Office of Camp No. 4, where they met with the representatives of the United Nations Agencies, including UNHCR, WHO, WFP, IOM, UNDP and ICRC. They briefed the United Nations representatives on the outcome of the visit to Cox's Bazar, cooperation between Myanmar and ASEAN in the repatriation process, and Myanmar's continued cooperation with UNDP and UNHCR in line with the Memorandum of Understanding, including the implementation of Quick Impact Projects in Northern Rakhine State.

Permanent Secretary and ASEAN ERAT Team explained on the queries raised by the United Nations representatives, specifically on the citizenship in line with the Citizenship Law, the National Camp Closure Strategy, access to education and health and activities to promote social cohesion among various communities.

Subsequently, Myanmar Delegation and ASEAN ERAT Team received the representatives from Hindu and Christian communities, who were currently residing in Cox's Bazar. Permanent Secretary explained on the cooperation with Bangladesh authorities for the return of Hindu communities. District Commissioner of Maungdaw District, Rakhine State Government, U Soe Aung and Executive Member of the Interfaith Dialogue Group, U Ragu Ne Myint also explained on the preparations for the Hindu communities in Northern Rakhine State.

On 29 July 2019, Myanmar delegation and ASEAN ERAT Team met with Mr. Kamrul Ahsan, Acting Foreign Secretary and Bangladesh delegation at the Meghna Guest House,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka. Bangladesh delegation comprised of Mr. Mahbub Uz Zaman, Secretary for Asia and Pacific, Mr. Md. Delwar Hossain, Director-General of South Asia region, and Mr. Manjurul Karim Khan Chowdhury, Ambassador of Bangladesh to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Permanent Secretary briefed the meeting on the discussion with the representatives of the displaced persons at the Camp No. 4, Cox's Bazar on 27 and 28 July 2019 as well as meetings with the representatives from the United Nations Agencies based in Cox's Bazar and representatives from Hindu and Christian communities. Furthermore, Permanent Secretary reminded the need to follow the bilateral arrangement on repatriation between the two countries, and highlighted on the preparations made by Myanmar Government and the readiness to receive the verified displaced persons.

Mr. Arnel Capili, Deputy Executive Director, AHA Centre and Mr. Ky-Anh Nguyen, Director, Socio-Cultural Community Department, ASEAN Secretariat also explained on the mandate given by the ASEAN Leaders and the terms of reference of the ASEAN ERAT Team to conduct the Preliminary Needs Assessment in Northern Rakhine State in March 2019, and the Comprehensive Needs Assessment to be conducted by ASEAN ERAT Team, and the ASEAN's continued support to the repatriation process.

At the end of the meeting, Acting Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh handed over the verification forms of 25,047 people to Myanmar delegation. Myanmar delegation requested the immediate delivery of colour photographs that is necessary for the systematic and effective verification.

To fulfill the bilateral agreement signed on 23 November 2017, the Myanmar side had put in place the necessary logistic and other facilities to be able to receive the verified returnees since 23 January 2018.

High-level Myanmar delegation led by Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs arrived back to Myanmar on 30 July 2019.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Nay Pyi Taw,

31 July 2019.