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ORAL STATEMENT

Item 4: Interactive Dialogue on the oral update of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (HRC res. 46/21)

MYANMAR: WORDS MUST GIVE WAY TO CONCRETE ACTION BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AS THE HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS DEEPENS

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-seventh session
21 June – 13 July 2021

Madam President,

The situation in Myanmar is a human rights and humanitarian crisis of staggering scale, spanning the entire country and affecting all communities.

The Myanmar military continues to arbitrarily detain, torture and kill. Humanitarian access remains severely restricted nationwide; and against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's economy is in freefall and experts are warning of food shortages¹. Clashes between the Myanmar military and civilians taking up arms have spread, including in urban centres.

While the rights of all those in Myanmar are under attack, minority groups have been specifically targeted by the Military, including the Kachin, Karen, Chin, Karenni, Ta'ang and Shan. In Karen, Karenni and Kachin States, tens of thousands have been forced to flee airstrikes and shelling, which have reportedly killed and injured civilians and destroyed property, including at least one school. In northern Shan state, thousands have been reportedly displaced due to escalating fighting between ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and forced recruitment. In Rakhine State, Rakhine and other minorities remain displaced as a result of armed conflict between the military and the Arakan Army, while the Rohingya population continues to be denied their basic rights, forced to live under apartheid conditions, with around 126,000 being held in internment camps since 2012.

¹ World Food Programme, WFP to step up operations in response to fast rising hunger in Myanmar, 22 April 2021, <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-step-operations-response-fast-rising-hunger-myanmar#:~:text=WFP%20estimates%20that%20within%20the,Myanmar%20Country%20Director%20Stephen%20Anderson>. United Nations Development Programme, Pandemic and political crisis could result in half of Myanmar's population living in poverty by 2022, UNDP says, 30 April 2021, <https://www.undp.org/press-releases/pandemic-and-political-crisis-could-result-half-myanmars-population-living-poverty>.

Madam President,

This Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council have now all condemned the military's killing spree; have all urged the military to release those arbitrarily detained and halt their assault on the people of Myanmar. And yet, these violations continue unabated. So we again urge the international community to take the long-overdue concrete action that is desperately needed to stem the tide of violations: to set aside politics and work together to hold the perpetrators of grave violations to account – including through an ICC referral – to impose targeted multilateral financial sanctions on senior officials; and to impose a comprehensive global arms embargo. And to protect the rights of refugees in neighbouring countries.

Madam High Commissioner,

What more can be done to ensure the voices of civil society in Myanmar are central to decision-making by the international community; and how can we ensure human rights are central to the international response to the crisis?

Thank you.