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## **National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21\***

### **Myanmar**

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## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction .....	3
II. Methodology and consultation process .....	3
III. Implementation of recommendations .....	3
A. Process on becoming member of international human rights treaties .....	3
B. Matters on Human Rights Commission .....	3
C. Collaboration with UN human rights mechanism .....	4
D. Reform process – rule of law, democratization and human rights reform .....	4
E. Undertaking economic development .....	6
F. Implementation on good governance and land issues .....	7
G. Implementation on the protection of vulnerable groups .....	8
H. Implementation on the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination .....	9
I. Health and education .....	11
J. Measures of interfaith friendship, hate speech, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly	13
K. Citizenship, internally displaced persons (IDP) and trafficking in persons .....	15
L. Ceasefire and national reconciliation .....	17
IV. Other activities .....	18
V. Conclusion .....	19

## I. Introduction

1. The Human Rights situation in Myanmar was reviewed during the Second Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) from 2 to 13 November 2015. At the meeting, 166 of the 281 recommendations made to Myanmar were accepted. This report reflects the development of Myanmar's Human Rights situation from November 2015 to March 2020 and includes the implementation of recommendations of the Second Cycle UPR outcomes and challenges of human rights protection.

2. After the National League for Democracy won the 2015 general election and the formation of the new government, there have been a lot of political developments. This report highlights the country's positive actions, not only on the accepted recommendations but also on the recommendations received during the Second Cycle review, and reflects the country's current political, economic, and social situation.

## II. Methodology and consultation process

3. The report was compiled in accordance with Resolution No. A/HRC/RES/16/21 of the United Nations Human Rights Council of 12 April 2011.

4. To implement the Universal Periodic Review's recommendations, the National Committee led by Vice-President U Myint Swe was formed. In accordance with the suggestions of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, the National Level Committee decided to assign the 12 work committees by sectors for the implementation of the recommendations. With the advice of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission and under the auspices of the Union Attorney General's Office and with the technical assistance from the Government of Denmark, implementation workshops were held to enhance knowledge of UPR and its implementation. Further, the Report Writing Committee, comprising high-ranking representatives from respective departments, was organized with the Attorney General of the Union as chairman. The Report Writing Committee organized a meeting, with support from UNDP on 15 November 2019, to solicit comments from Civil Society Organizations.

## III. Implementation of recommendations

### A. Process on becoming member of international human right treaties

**Recommendations 143.1, 143.2, 143.3, 143.4, 143.5, 143.6, 143.7, 143.8, 143.9, 143.10, 143.11, 143.12, 143.13, 143.14, 144.1, 144.2, 144.3, 144.4, 144.5, 144.6, 144.7, 144.8, 144.9, 144.10, 144.11, 144.12, 144.13, 144.14, 144.15, 144.16, 144.17, 144.18, 144.19, 144.20, 144.21, 144.22, 144.23, 144.24, 144.25, 144.26, 144.27**

5. Myanmar ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) on 6 October 2017 and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC-AC) at the United Nations Treaty Event on 27 September 2019; and Myanmar is making necessary preparations to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

### B. Matters on Human Rights Commission

**Recommendations 143.42, 143.43, 143.44, 143.45, 143.46, 143.47, 143.48**

6. The Myanmar Human Rights Commission was established under the Myanmar Human Rights Commission Law in line with the Paris Principles.

## **C. Collaboration with UN human rights mechanism**

### **Recommendations 143.49, 143.50, 143.51, 143.52**

7. Regarding the cooperation with the United Nations human rights mechanism, a workshop on the national system for promotion and protection of human rights was held on 19-20 August 2019 with the active participation of relevant stakeholders. Myanmar facilitated a total of ten visits for Ms. Christine Schraner Burgener, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar. With the acceptance of the Government of Myanmar, the Special Envoy's office in Nay Pyi Taw was opened on 17 December 2018.

8. Myanmar has also been cooperating with Ms. Pramila Patten, United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. On 7 December 2018, Myanmar signed the Joint Communiqué with the United Nations to better prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence in the country. To implement the Joint Communiqué, the National Committee on Prevention and Response of Conflict related Sexual violence was formed on 26 March 2019 and the National Committee is drafting the Action Plan in consultation with UN agencies.

9. In addition, cooperation between Myanmar and the Office of Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, led by Ms. Virginia Gamba, has reached an unprecedented level. Several capacity-building activities were undertaken, including workshops and training of trainers (ToT) in collaboration with the Office of the SRSG on Children and Armed Conflict in late 2018 and 2019, and all the senior focal officials responsible for this issue from all the Regions and States were brought in.

10. With regard to the prevention of killing, maiming and sexual violence against Children in Armed Conflict, the National Action Plan on the Prevention of Killing, Maiming, and Sexual Violence against Children in Armed Conflict was adopted in early 2020. Pursuant to this National Action Plan, the relevant government agencies have been conducting awareness raising activities nationwide. The Government has requested the UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) and UNICEF to assist in the national awareness campaign on the new Child Rights Law and the implementation of the National Action Plan.

11. To prevent the relisting of the Myanmar Tatmadaw (Myanmar Armed Forces) in the Annex, the Ministry of Defence has been closely collaborating with CTFMR for further improvements in the issue of Children and Armed Conflict.

## **D. Reform process – rule of law, democratization and human rights reform**

### **Recommendations 143.15, 143.18, 143.19, 143.20, 143.21, 143.22, 143.30, 143.64, 143.65, 144.72, 144.73, 144.74, 144.75, 144.76, 144.77, 144.82**

#### **Rule of law**

12. To improve the capacity of the executive branch, and to keep abreast of the times, the Union Government Ministries are reviewing and revising the existing laws and enacting new laws, as necessary. Legal departments have also been established in some ministries.

13. In each Hluttaw, the legislation process is a transparent one where public opinion and feedback for every law during the drafting stage. To adopt policies on the rule of law, the Committee for Security, Stability, and Rule of Law, led by the State Counsellor, was established.

14. The Union Government established Rule of Law Centres and the Justice Sector Coordination Body composed of 17 members led by the Attorney General of the Union by Notification No. 14/2017 dated 9-2-2017. Sub-Coordination Bodies for Rule of Law Centres and Justice Sector were established in all Regions and States. Since 2015, four Rule of Law Centres have been opened and are providing legal advice to the public. The National Conference on Justice Sector Coordination for Rule of Law was successfully held

in March 2018 and the Five-Year Strategic Plan (2019-2023) was adopted and is now being implemented, based on the results of the Conference, under the theme of “Justice for People”.

15. The Legal Aid Law was enacted in 2016. Different Legal Aid Bodies are being formed at the Union, Region, State, District, and Township levels. The Domestic legal framework allows the death penalty but no death sentence has been executed since 1988. A total of 20 amnesties have been granted during this period and 57,034 prisoners were released in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and the Criminal Procedure Code.

16. The Supreme Court of the Union and the Union Attorney General's Office issued Code of Ethics to relevant officers. The Union Attorney General's Office has implemented the Five-Year Strategic Plan (2015-2019), entitled "Moving forward to the rule of law". In accordance with this Strategy, the Fair Trial Standards Guidebook was published for law officers. The Legal Research Team, which comprises law officers, is researching core Human Rights Instruments in order to promote human rights.

17. The Union Attorney General's Office successfully established Myanmar's Law Information System ([www.mlis.gov.mm](http://www.mlis.gov.mm)) on 24 May 2018 to enable public and foreign investors to have easy access to legal information. The Supreme Court of the Union is implementing the Judiciary Five-Year Strategic Action Plan (2018-2022) with the theme of “Towards Improving Justice for All” to facilitate and expand public access to court services, and to enhance judicial independence.

18. According to the Judicial Officers Protection Act and Bar Council Act, judges and lawyers are assured guarantees against interference in the performance of their professional duties.

19. As part of the Bar Council reform process, the Law Amending the Bar Council Act was enacted on 10 June 2019 in line with the current situation. On 2 August 2020, the Bar Council Election was held throughout the country and 11 Bar Council members were elected. The Independent Lawyers Association of Myanmar (ILAM) was officially registered on 28 November 2016. Legal Professionals are free to join any professional association according to Section 354 (c) of the Constitution of the Union.

20. The Ministry of Home Affairs is restructuring the Myanmar Police Force to serve the public interest more effectively, and to become a credible, skilled and competent security force trusted and relied upon by the people.

21. To improve capacity and enhance international cooperation, it has concluded agreements and its cooperating with international and regional organizations.

22. In its five year project, the Myanmar Police Force is focusing on areas such as legal framework and procedure, community policing, crowd management, and non-discrimination.

23. National Crime Prevention Strategy (2018-2020) was launched on 15 May 2019.

#### **Undertaking to develop democracy**

24. The National League for Democracy (NLD) won the 2015 general elections and since assuming governmental responsibility, it has been developing democratic reforms.

25. In the legislative sector, the Joint Committee on Amending the 2008 Constitution was formed on 19 February 2019.

26. In the executive sector, as part of the administrative reform, the General Administration Department under the Ministry of Home Affairs was transferred to the Ministry of Union Government Office on 28 December 2018. This will make the department more responsive to public needs, morally stronger, free from self-interest and corruption, and able to perform their duties effectively in accordance with laws, rules, and procedures.

27. In the judicial sector, the National Case Management Programme (NCMP), was implemented in all courts of the Union, and a court-led mediation system was developed.

### **Protection and promotion of human rights**

28. As the protection and promotion of human rights is described in relevant sectors of the report, the discussion in this section will be of a general nature. Educational stories, talk shows, news and articles concerning human rights are published and broadcast by the Ministry of Information through radio, television and daily newspapers.

29. National Human Rights Mechanism is being developed to protect and promote human rights and to implement the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

30. Birth registrations (Birth Certificates) are issued to ensure the basic human rights of newly born children. A National Education Strategy has been adopted to ensure that every school-age child has access to quality education and that education opportunities are provided without discrimination.

31. Additionally, the Ministry of Education is developing basic human rights courses aimed at primary, middle, and high school levels in Basic Education Curricula and Education College Curricula. Law departments in universities teach human rights as a subject. The Law Department of the University of Yangon teaches human rights as a diploma course as well.

32. In the implementation of the principle of access to education for everyone, including vulnerable groups, the Education Sub-Committee for Persons with Disabilities was formed on 3 December 2019 to promote learning opportunities in education and vocational training for children, adolescents, and adults with disabilities. The representatives of related ministries, INGOs, NGOs, UN Agencies, and many associations of persons with disabilities are included in this sub-committee.

33. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for implementation of Myanmar Decent Work Country Programme (2018-2021) was signed between the tripartite representatives (Government, Employer and Worker) and the ILO on 21 September 2018.

34. The Law Relating to Overseas Employment, 1999 is now being reviewed for amendment in line with the current situation in cooperation with the relevant ministries, NGOs, INGOs, international organizations and legal experts. The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population has been operating pre-departure orientation course centres for migrant workers in Yangon and Mandalay since 2017 and is giving awareness training related to relevant countries.

35. Myanmar appointed labour attachés in Myanmar Embassies, as necessary, to protect the rights of Myanmar migrant workers and also to settle workers' disputes and to provide updated information for the Ministry.

## **E. Undertaking economic development**

### **Recommendations 143.31, 143.32, 143.33, 143.34, 143.35, 143.36, 143.37, 143.38, 143.39, 143.40, 143.41, 143.104**

36. To foster economic development in Myanmar, the Government initially launched a 12-point Economic Policy in July of 2016 supported by a 7-point Investment Policy launched in November 2017. Following the adoption of these complementary policies, the Government of Myanmar developed the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan 2018-2030 (MSDP), a more comprehensive medium-to-long-term plan consisting of 5 goals, 28 strategies and 251 action plans. Goals and action plans are aimed at sustaining political and economic stability while unleashing private-sector led economic growth, facilitating human-centered social development and strengthening environmental protection. Fully aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the MSDP is also intended to facilitate Myanmar's transition away from a traditional sectoral-planning system towards a more modern, strategic planning system whereby public expenditure is utilized effectively in pursuit of strategic goals and action plans articulated within the MSDP. The new Myanmar Investment Law and Myanmar Companies Law enacted in 2016 and 2017 respectively, seek to create an enabling environment with which to attract

responsible foreign and domestic investment in pursuit of these same goals. Also, to further the ease of doing business, an online company registration system, Myanmar Companies Online (<https://www.myco.dica.gov.mm>), was launched in August of 2018. Furthermore, The Arbitration Law enacted in 2016 is largely based upon the 2006 United Nations Commission on the International Trade Law, and fully aligned with legal rules governing international commercial dispute settlement.

37. Developed per Presidential Directive 2/2018 (November 2018), the Myanmar Project Bank ([www.projectbank.gov.mm](http://www.projectbank.gov.mm)) was launched in the form of a publicly accessible, online routinely updated databank of strategic projects identified per a rigorous screening process, designed to promote greater transparency and to entrench the use of open and competitive public sector procurement practices. A Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) Center was also established within the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry in February 2020 to assist with establishing clearer and more transparent pathways for investors interested in financing PPP projects in Myanmar.

38. Several much-needed laws have been enacted contributing to a more sound regulatory system and favorable investment climate, including The Industrial Design Law (2019), The Trademark Law (2019), The Patent Law (2019), The Copyright Law (2019), The Revenue Management Law (2019), The Consumer Protection Law (2019), The Myanmar Gemstone Law (2019), The Science, Technology and Innovation Law (2018), The Revenue Appellate Law (2018), The Forest Law (2018), The Myanmar Tourism Law (2018), The Registration of Deeds Law (2018), The Petroleum and Petroleum Products Law (2017), The Petroleum Hand-dug Well Law (2017), The Inland Water Transport Law (2017), The New Plant Variety Protection Law (2016), The Financial Institutions Law (2016), The Payment of Wages Law (2016), The Shops and Establishments Law (2016), The Taxation Law of the Union (2016), The Specific Goods Tax Law (2016), The Rail Transportation Law (2016), The Road Transport Operations Law (2016) and The Condominium Law (2016).

39. With a view to the equitable development of all States and Regions within Myanmar, the Government of Myanmar has designated each as being either developed, moderately developed and inadequately developed, with investors provided with a range of corresponding investment incentives. Financial inclusion efforts continue to be focused primarily on those engaged in the agriculture, low-income families and services for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

40. Road connectivity, the expansion of rural road networks, and community-based tourism are being promoted to reduce poverty and to increase rural productivity. Accordingly, poverty rate has been halved, dropping from 48% in 2005 to 24.8% in 2017, according to the Myanmar Living Condition Survey (2017).

## **F. Implementation on good governance and land issues**

**Recommendations 143.80, 143.81, 143.82, 143.83, 143.84, 143.85, 143.86, 143.87, 143.123, 143.124**

41. The Police Disciplinary Law and the Penal Code prohibiting torture of detainees and suspects are in place. Any police personnel alleged to have inflicted torture on those in custody is investigated and appropriate action is taken when found guilty. Action was taken against 16 police officers in 2017, 22 in 2018 and 13 in 2019 under the Police Disciplinary Law. Furthermore, 7 police officers in 2017 and 4 in 2018 were prosecuted under the Penal Code. To fight corruption in the police force, action was taken against 47 officers and 41 other ranks in 2017, 39 officers and 36 other ranks in 2018, 36 officers and 35 other ranks in 2019. For failure to comply with legal procedures, action was taken against 99 personnel in 2017, 133 in 2018 and 119 in 2019. The laws, regulations and procedures of the Myanmar Police Force are also being reviewed for amendment.

42. As corruption is a great obstacle to the rule of law, Myanmar acceded to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Awareness-raising on the anti-corruption issue has been conducted from Primary School to University level. Corruption Prevention Units

(CPUs) have been formed in 22 Ministries/organizations. Under the Anti-Corruption Law, 2013, 179 cases were prosecuted from 2016 to 2019. Among those prosecuted were a state Chief Minister and a Deputy Minister. Between 2016 and 2019, 8.9 billion Kyats were returned to the State budget and 3.2 billion Kyats and 4 million US\$ were confiscated.

43. One-Stop Service (OSS) has been opened in 316 townships, make speedy services available to the public. Mobile Services Delivery Teams have also been introduced. The Public Service Law Drafting Committee is preparing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for drafting the public service law.

44. Grants, licenses, land tenure certificates and land use permits are being issued for farmland, vacant, fallow, virgin land and government disposal land by the relevant authority in accordance with the Land Management Law, rules and procedures. The land registration system is also in place. The Central Committee for Scrutinizing Confiscated Farmlands and other Lands, chaired by Vice President II, was formed. Under the Committee are sub-committees in Nay Pyi Taw, regions and states, districts and townships. The Committee scrutinizes and resolves land issues for farmers whose lands were confiscated after 1988.

45. The National Land Use Council formed the Working Committee on Drafting the National Land Law and Harmonization of Laws Related with Land Management and the Working Group for Supporting Drafting the National Land Law.

## **G. Implementation on the protection of vulnerable groups**

**Recommendations 143.25, 143.26, 143.53, 143.54, 143.55, 143.56, 143.57, 143.58, 143.59, 143.102, 143.103, 143.72, 143.73, 143.76, 143.77**

46. On 27 September 2019, Myanmar became a Party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. On 8 June 2020, Myanmar ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention to prevent child labour, and to ensure the rights and safety of the children in Myanmar.

47. The Myanmar Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (2019-2033) has been adopted. To implement the National Work Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour, the National Level Committee, chaired by Vice President I, was formed on 5 February 2018. Committees on child labour eradication were also formed from national to region and state levels.

48. To serve the best interests of the child, the new Child Rights Law was enacted in July 2019 in line with the UNCRC and its protocols. Child Courts were established in Yangon and Mandalay. Elsewhere, township judges are vested with the authority to adjudicate child cases. The law amending the Early Childhood Care and Development Law was enacted on 6 June 2018. The National Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Intervention (2017-2021) was launched on 7 April 2017.

49. The National Committee on the Rights of the Child and Sub-Committees have been established to promote and protect the rights of the child. The Department of Social Welfare has been using the case management system as a community-based system for child protection since 2015. At the township level, 259 case managers have been trained and deployed. The system will be extended to cover protection of women, persons with disabilities and older people.

50. The Action Plan to prevent child-rape and to provide quick and effective responses is in place.

51. The Association for Prevention, Care and Protection of Abandoned Children provides training of trainers on the reduction and protection of abandoned children. Awareness-raising activities on reproductive health were held in regions and states under the leadership of the Myanmar National Committee on Women to eliminate the abandonment of children and violence against women, and to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation and Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare

Association, members of the Myanmar National Committee on Women, provide necessary assistance in women's development and women's life protection in regions and states, districts, townships, wards and villages.

52. Myanmar Tatmadaw has been cooperating with UNCTFMR to effectively prevent under-age recruitment. As a result, the Myanmar Tatmadaw has been delisted from the Annex of the report of the United Nations Secretary-General which was submitted on 9 June 2020.

53. Moreover, the Child Rights Law provides that any person who recruits, conscripts or enlists due to failure to inspect systematically persons who have not attained the age of 18 years into the Defence Services may be punished with imprisonment which may extend to two years, and shall also be liable to a fine. If the offence is wilfully committed, the offender may be punished with imprisonment which may extend to five years. Any person who recruits persons under the age of 18 years into other armed groups that are not the Defence Services may be punished with imprisonment which may extend to five years. Also, any person who uses persons under the age of 18 years in battle may be punished with imprisonment which may extend to ten years.

54. The Committee and Working Committee on Prevention of Six Grave Violations against Children in Armed Conflict were formed in 2019 and the National Action Plan on the prevention of killing and maiming and sexual violence against children in armed conflict has already been approved by the Committee.

55. Myanmar submitted the combined fourth and fifth periodic report in 2015 to the UN CEDAW Committee and the Exceptional Report was also submitted on 1 February 2019.

56. The Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict was signed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 7 December 2018. Subsequently, the National Committee on Prevention and Response of Conflict-related Sexual violence was established.

57. To protect women under twelve years of age, Section 376 of the Penal Code was amended in 2019, in particular its sub-section (3) which now provides that "whoever commits rape against a woman who is under twelve years of age shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment for a term of twenty years". To protect women and young girls who are affected by or vulnerable to violence, the Department of Social Welfare has established One-Stop Women Support Centres (OSWSC) in Yangon, Mandalay, Lashio and Mawlamyine.

58. The Protection and Prevention of Violence against Women (PoVAW) Bill has been drafted in cooperation with respective government departments, agencies and women organizations which have actively engaged in women's rights issues to enhance the protection of women and girls who are victims and to enable them to enjoy their rights. The Department of Social Welfare has given livelihood trainings to women in Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps and provided child-friendly spaces and psycho-social support for vulnerable groups. The Department of Social Welfare opened a 24-hour helpline (telephone service), starting from 30 November 2016 for direct inquiries and requests for help.

## **H. Implementation on the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination**

**Recommendations 143.23, 143.24, 143.60, 143.61, 143.62, 143.63, 143.66, 143.67, 143.68, 143.69, 143.70, 143.71, 143.78, 143.79, 143.118**

59. The Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, in Section 21 (a), Section 347, 350, and 368, provides for the promotion of gender equality. Four technical working groups were organized to implement the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013- 2022). In accordance with paragraph 23 of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, the government is aiming to achieve 30% of women participation in

the peace process, 22% participation was achieved in the third Union Peace Conference. The Department of Rural Development has been implementing the Community Driven Development Project and Enhancing the Rural Livelihood and Income Project. In those projects, 50% of women participated in the Supporting Committees at the village level to ensure the right to equal participation, leadership and decision making and equal pay for equal work. Gender equality is integrated into the school curricula at kindergarten, primary, middle and high school level, and will be integrated into the college level curriculum as well.

60. The General Administration Department (GAD) held workshops on capacity building for women administrators at ward and village tract level in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, with 104 women administrators participating. There were 42 women administrators in 2015 and this increased to 109 in 2019.

61. Myanmar Tatmadaw allows women to join the military services. Since 2012, they have been able to voluntarily join the Tatmadaw by attending training courses such as Female Cadet Course, Female Nursing Cadet Course, Female Medical Cadet Course, Female Sergeant Clerk Course, Female Private Course and they enjoy the same rights as men.

62. Relating to sexual violence against civilian women, action will be taken against military personnel who commit rape to the extent of 20 years imprisonment. In the case of murder in the course of committing rape, the penalty will be a death sentence in accordance with the Defence Services Act and Rules. Under the policy of zero-tolerance, Myanmar Tatmadaw does not allow any of its members to act with impunity. It has taken serious action against every member who violates civil rights. Between 2016 and February 2020, 3 officers and 49 other ranks, totaling 52, were punished for committing the above mentioned offenses.

63. The Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS) published guidelines on Healthcare Response for Gender Based Violence (GBV), which were disseminated to the government hospitals and healthcare centres along with instruction for strict implementation. In order to provide quality healthcare services, MOHS is establishing One-Stop Crisis Centres (OSCC) in 1,000 bedded General Hospital (Nay Pyi Taw) and Pindaya General Hospital as pilot projects.

64. The Ministry of Home Affairs provides all inmates, without discrimination, with healthcare, food, vocational skills, formal education, recreation as well as allowing physical exercise and religious activities. It allows the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC), Judges from District Courts, Region and State Courts, Supreme Court of the Union, the Citizen's Fundamental Rights Committee of Pyithu Hluttaw, the Citizens' Fundamental Rights, Democracy and Human Rights Committee of Amyotha Hluttaw and ICRC to visit and observe prisons.

65. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was enacted in 2015 and its rules were also issued in 2017. The National Committee and Working Committee were formed under the Law. The National Committee is implementing the 22 Concluding Observations of UNCRPD Committee meeting held in 2019.

66. Maternal and Child Cash Transfer Program (MCCT) is being implemented in Chin, Rakhine, Kayin and Kayah States and Narga Self-Administered Region. All pregnant women and children to two year olds in those areas are eligible for 15,000 Kyats per month as a benefit.

67. Social pension of 10,000 Kyats per month is granted to people who are 85 years and above according to Elderly People Law, 2016. The Department of Social Welfare is providing services for persons with disabilities by establishing schools and care centres and providing cash and in-kind assistance. In the Ethnic Rights Protection Law 2015, it is provided that "No one shall commit any act which is intended or is likely to promote feelings of hatred, enmity and discord among the ethnic groups". No one is allowed to perform, conduct or act in order to incite any hatred, disputes, conflicts, and animosity among nationals of Myanmar. Whoever violates these provisions or is accused with strong

evidence of violation shall be punished with imprisonment of not more than 2 years, or a fine of not more than 200,000 Kyats, or with both.

68. In the education sector, efforts are being made for equal access to education, from primary to university level, and to ensure that university entrance is based on the qualities of respective students, regardless of nationality, religion, race, disability, social status and/or gender. New curricula in basic education have been developed, based on the concept of mutual respect, understanding the differences and diversities, and harbouring positive mindset and outlooks for sustainable peace.

69. For remote and border areas, new teachers are recruited especially from among local residents. Primary schools are upgraded and teaching assistants are recruited to help ethnic students and to teach ethnic languages. Vocational training is provided for school-aged children who did not complete their basic education. To achieve human resource development for all ethnic groups, children from poor families in remote ethnic community areas and border areas are provided with free basic education at ethnic youth training schools.

70. On 1 April 2016, the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs was established to achieve equal citizens' rights for all ethnic peoples, to preserve ethnic literature and culture, to foster ethnic unity and socio-economic development. The Ministry of Ethnic Affairs is promoting the development of social life, which covers language, literature, fine arts, culture, custom and religion, historical heritage, peace, and the rights of the national races, in line with the National Constitution. In addition to promoting the interest of the ethnic peoples of Myanmar, the government is also drafting the rules for protecting the rights of ethnic peoples and facilitating the welfare of all peoples residing in the country.

## I. Health and education

**Recommendations 143.105, 143.106, 143.107, 143.108, 143.109, 143.110, 143.111, 143.112, 143.113, 143.114, 143.115, 143.116, 143.117**

71. The Ministry of Health and Sports has formulated and is implementing the National Health Plan (NHP) (2017-2021). To achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), NHP aims to strengthen the country's health system and pave the way to UHC, choosing a path that is explicitly pro-poor. Supply side readiness is essential to provide effective health care services to the community. In order to fulfill supply side readiness, Inclusive Township Health Plans (ITHP) and State/Regional Health Plans have been formulated and implemented throughout the country. The National Health Accounts (NHA) (2016-2018) has been compiled and preliminary findings were disseminated on 6 March 2020. To establish the National Health Insurance System, the National Health Insurance Law has been drafted in collaboration with related ministries. From 2016 to 2019, 21 new Station Hospitals, 71 Rural Health Centres (RHC) and 92 Sub-Rural Health Centres have been opened throughout the country. Moreover, 42 traditional medicine hospitals and 210 township traditional medicine clinics are providing traditional medical services to the community.

72. The Nutrition Promotion Steering Committee was formed in June 2018 and the Multi-Sectoral Plan of Action on Nutrition 2018/19–2022/23 was developed to reduce all forms of malnutrition in mothers, children and adolescent girls. The Strategic Plan for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases 2017-2021 and National Cancer Control Programme 2017-2021 are also being implemented. The Health Promotion Unit, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health and Sports received the Dr. LEE-Jong Wook memorial prize for public health from the World Health Organization by establishing 560 out of 1,849 RHCs, also called Non-communicable Diseases Control (NCD) clinics in rural areas since 2018 with the aim of managing the screening of NCD effectively. Now in 2020 there are 1,316 RHCs. Community clinics are intended mainly for the rural population which comprises 70% of the population of Myanmar.

73. Standardized Health Messages Books (SHMBs) were distributed in 2017 and translated into 55 ethnic languages; Guidelines and SOP for Basic Health Staff (BHS) were

put into mobile application and distributed to Township Medical Officers, Station Medical Officers and BHS.

74. In 2018, the Central School Health Committee was reformed. The National School Health Strategic Plan (2017-2022) was developed and is being implemented. Healthy Myanmar Seminars with the motto "Exercise is Medicine" were held in October 2017. The "Physical Education Today for an Active Tomorrow" seminar was held in May 2019. The Advisory Board for Exercise is Medicine (EIM) Myanmar National Centre was formed to work more effectively, in cooperation with international organizations.

75. For temporarily displaced persons, health care services are provided through clinics as well as through mobile health teams and specialist teams. These provide public health services such as communicable disease surveillance, immunization programmes, maternal and under-five children health care services, elderly health care, patient referral to nearby hospitals and health education.

76. The Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law was amended on February 2018 to provide better healthcare services for drug abusers. Development of Mental Health Law is also in progress for avoiding discrimination of mentally ill persons and providing better healthcare services. To provide better health care in prison, preparations were started in 2016 and a consultation meeting was with the Ministry of Home Affairs in July 2019. Health care is provided to HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria patients in collaboration with local and international health organizations such as MSF, Union ART Supply and National Aid Control Programme.

77. The Department of Medical Services is planning to expand geriatric wards in general hospitals with the aim of improving the health of elderly people. Elderly-care giver training was conducted in March 2019 to provide priority health care services for elderly people, disabled persons and retired government staff. The Food and Drug Administration Department (FDA) which is responsible for the safety of food, drugs and cosmetics is taking part in drafting relevant laws. Since 2019, it has been conducting mobile investigation of foods and cosmetics in all states and regions by using a Mobile Laboratory Van service.

78. To provide quality reproductive health services for all pregnant women and mothers, the Five-Year Strategic Plan for Reproductive Health (2014-2018) has been implemented. Strategy to end preventable Maternal Mortality in Myanmar (2017-2021) has been developed with the objective of reducing maternal mortality from 173 per 100,000 live births to 92 per 100,000 live births in 2030. The Implementation Plan for Family Planning 2020 is also underway.

79. Total government health expenditure has increased 15 times in 10 years, coming to 3.67% of government expenditure; from 76 billion Kyats in 2010–11 fiscal year to 1.172 trillion Kyats in 2019–2020.

80. Allocation of budget to the health sector has been increasing year by year between 2015 and 2019 through the utilization of Government allocation, international assistance and World Bank loans. 15.63 billion Kyats for Maternal and Reproductive Health activities, 33.86 billion Kyats for Child Health Development activities and 18.05 billion Kyats for Nutrition Promotion activities have been utilized respectively. Moreover, 31% of total annual vaccine cost is being funded by the Government and the rest 69% by GAVI, the vaccine alliance. Annual vaccine cost amounts to one percent of the total annual health budget. During the 2019-2020 budget year, out of the total annual vaccine cost (USD 31.9 millions), USD 9.8 million was funded by the Government.

81. The Myanmar Human Resources for Health Strategy (2018-2021) was developed for the production of an adequate, competent and productive health workforce, and for its efficient utilization. Twenty-two midwifery schools have been opened in all regions and states. A new midwifery school will be opened in Hakah, Chin State. Ten percent of all students accepted by the Nursing and Midwifery Schools are from hard to reach areas (including Rakhine State) and self-administered zones. Currently, 35 students including 3 Muslim students from Rakhine State are studying at medical universities. Furthermore, 89 students and 23 students are also studying for the Diploma in Nursing and Diploma in

Midwifery respectively. Moreover, it is planned to open a new nursing and midwifery school in Kyaukpyu Township, Rakhine State, in the 2021 academic year.

82. To assist the Myanmar Government's efforts towards the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 outbreak in Rakhine State, an Action Plan was adopted between Myanmar and ICRC on 14 May 2020 to provide necessary assistance to all IDPs and vulnerable communities in Rakhine State. Under the Action Plan, ICRC has provided PPE materials, hand washing and sanitising facilities, distribution of COVID-19 related information, Education and Communication (IEC), conducted awareness raising activities and assisted in improving public health referral system. The central and local authorities concerned, including the Myanmar Red Cross Society, have been closely cooperating with ICRC to implement the Action Plan effectively.

83. Free education is provided for all education levels. Short-term vocational training certificate courses which meet local needs were opened for out-of-school youths from the IDP camps in Kachin State. Building on Quality Basic Education Programmes (BoQBEP) is being implemented in collaboration with UNICEF so that students from Rakhine State, including vulnerable groups, can attain quality basic education. The Welcoming School Programme manual to receive children from the IDP camps is now being drafted and preparations have been made for Muslim students who cannot attend a university to continue their education through distance education.

84. In accordance with the National Education Strategic Plan, measures have been taken in the education sector to strengthen opportunities, quality and inclusion. Policies are liberalized, schools are upgraded and new schools are opened every year. In the 2018–2019 school year, a total of 6,386 schools were upgraded to the next level. In 2015, technical and vocational training programmes were offered at 58 technical institutes and schools. The number of students enrolled in the government technical colleges, institutes, and high schools were 17,652 in 2016, 19,676 in 2017 and 23,242 in 2018.

85. New KG+5,4,3 System is being implemented to provide quality education in accordance with the National Education Law. For an all-round development of children, a game-based curriculum for children over five years old (the primary and secondary level) has been developed in collaboration with UNICEF, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other development partners.

86. Systematic arrangements have been made for prisoners to be provided with vocational training and formal education during their imprisonment.

87. In accordance with the Child Rights Law, the school curricula, including culture, moral and civics, life skills, arts (music and painting), physical education and all the core subjects, have been developed to be in line with an all-inclusive education.

## **J. Measures of interfaith friendship, hate speech, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly**

**Recommendations 143.88, 143.89, 143.90, 143.91, 143.92, 143.93, 143.94, 143.95, 143.96, 143.97, 143.98, 143.99, 143.100, 143.101, 144.80, 144.81, 144.83, 144.84**

### **Interfaith friendship activities**

88. The Constitution of Myanmar guarantees every citizen equal rights to freedom of conscience and to freely profess and practice religion. According to the recent statistics of the Ministry of Religious and Cultural Affairs, the current status of religious buildings for different faiths across the country are one Monastery for every 673 Buddhists, one Church for every 443 Christians, one Mosque for every 493 Muslims, and one Temple for every 635 Hindus.

89. As per the recommendation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission to list and protect historic, religious and cultural sites of all communities in Rakhine, the number of religious edifices that were allowed to be built or renovated by the Nay Pyi Taw Council, and Region and State governments across the country from April 2016 to February 2020 amount to 406

religious buildings for Buddhism, 167 for Christianity, 52 for Islam, 26 for Hinduism and 3 for other faiths, respectively.

90. Freedom of worship in the prisons is practiced as devotees are permitted to worship according to their faith on normal days as well as on holy days.

91. Since 2018, the Religions for Peace (RfP) (Myanmar) has conducted training programmes to promote interfaith harmony and the role of women and youth. The Asia Region Multi-Religion consultation with Religions for Peace (RfP) representatives from 21 Asian countries was held from March 5 to 7, 2019 at St. Mary's Cathedral Church, Yangon.

92. The Interfaith Friendship Group (Myanmar) has been set up with one group at the central level, 11 groups at region and state levels, 40 groups at district level, 221 groups at township level, in total 173 groups, so as to enhance a peaceful social life, to prevent religious conflicts, to take care of victims of religious disputes, to implement rehabilitation works, to safeguard national identity by creating mutual respect between different faith groups. With the goal of national development and solidarity through interfaith friendship activities, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Collaboration was signed between the Interfaith Friendship Group (Myanmar) and the Religions for Peace (Myanmar) on 4 February 2019.

93. His Holiness Pope Francis donated one hundred thousand US Dollars which were distributed equally to different faiths in Rakhine State. To share knowledge on violence and the consequences of wars caused by religious extremists across the world, the youth's consultation camp at St. Mary's Cathedral Church in Yangon was hosted by Religions for Peace (Myanmar) from 18 to 20 December 2018. Furthermore, interfaith friendship group members attended the interfaith dialogues, workshops and meetings in the Philippines, New Zealand, China, Cambodia, Indonesia and Australia. There were 257 consultations of the interfaith friendship group between 2016 and February 2020.

#### **Hate speech, freedom of expression and assembly**

94. In accordance with Section 364 of the Constitution which prohibits hate speech on social and religious issues, the Protection Against Hate Speech Bill is being developed. The National Cultural Central Committee led by Vice President 2 was formed with relevant ministers from regions and states to promote cultural preservation. Directive on the prevention of incitement to hatred and violence (or) prevention of proliferation of hate speech was issued by the Office of the President on 20 April 2020. Since then all government institutions and agencies have conducted awareness activities on hate speech. As a follow-up to implementation of this notification, the Government is currently collaborating with UNESCO through its proposal to hold awareness raising and capacity trainings on prevention of hate speech. This training is intended for government officials of different ministries and departments at Union and State/Region levels.

95. A Workshop on Enhancing Women's Social Cohesion Roles in Rakhine State was held in Yangon organized by the Centre for Diversity and National Harmony (CDNH) and the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in February 2020. Anti-hate speech campaigns were conducted in 17 townships of Rakhine State in March 2020. A workshop on reviewing the activities of anti-hate speech in Rakhine State was held in July 2020 and was attended by 138 women representatives from the 17 townships, representing diverse communities, assessed their activities.

96. The Press Law 2014 provides the news media personnel with the right to collect information, to enter into premises of certain offices, departments and organizations in accordance with regulations. Since April 2013, publication of private newspapers has been allowed. Regional news from different states in eleven ethnic languages are broadcast daily on television. Media personnel have the right to collect news in the areas where there are armed conflicts or where disturbances, riots, and public demonstrations are taking place. While collecting news, in accord with the terms and conditions stipulated by the relevant responsible organization, they shall be exempt from arrest and detention, and instruments relating to the acquisition of news shall not be seized or destroyed by any security organization. They shall also have the right to ask for the protection of the security organizations. The Ministry of Information has been conducting consultations with the

Myanmar News Media Council to amend the law on the duties and responsibilities of media personnel.

97. Regarding the protection of those holding peaceful assemblies or peaceful processions, the police shall take necessary protective and safeguarding measures to prevent disturbance, annoyance, assault, coercion or obstruction, and to keep those persons safe from danger in accordance with Section 13 of the 2016 Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law.

98. The Ministry of Information is also collaborating with the News Media Council, UNESCO, IMF, local news and journalist organizations, such as Myanmar Journalists Association, Myanmar Journalist Union and Myanmar Journalists Network. Myanmar News Media Council conducted three workshops at the Union level, and twelve workshops at the Region and State levels.

99. According to the Union Election Law, the Union Election Commission held a by-election for 19 vacant constituencies on 1 April 2017 and a by-election for 19 vacant constituencies on 3 November 2018.

100. The Union Election Commission is committed to holding free and fair elections in 2020. The Commission has set five criteria for the elections which must be free in accordance with the law, fair in accordance with the law, transparent, trustworthy, and the election results must reflect the will of the voters. It is collaborating with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Democracy Reporting International (DRI), Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD), International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES), Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), DEMO Finland as well as the Carter Centre and Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), and civil society organizations to address election issues. Moreover, the Commission had conferred with ambassadors from 18 foreign embassies accredited to Myanmar and country representatives on their assistance related to the 2020 general elections including the participation and cooperation of women in politics.

## **K. Citizenship, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and trafficking in persons**

### **Recommendations 143.119, 143.120, 143.121, 143.122, 143.74, 144.75**

101. The National Registration and Citizenship Department under the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population has undertaken to ensure the legal status of residents in Myanmar in accordance with the 1949 Registration Act for residents within Myanmar and the Myanmar Citizenship Law of 1982. From 2016 to August 2020, Citizenship Scrutiny Cards for 10 year olds and 18 year olds have been issued to 114,112 people in Rakhine State. National Verification (NV) cards have been issued to 80,482 people who turned in their Temporary Identity Certificates. National verification process is being conducted in all townships of Rakhine State and the Central Body granted 569 persons Citizen status and, 3,574 persons as Naturalized Citizen status, between April 2016 to August 2020.

102. 19,946 NV Cards were issued in Sittwe, Rathedaung, Pauktaw, Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, Myebon, Kyaukpyu, Minbya, Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Thandwe, Ramree and Ann Townships within Rakhine State. The total number of Citizenship Scrutiny Cards issued in Rakhine State is 10,705. With the purpose of promoting peace and stability in Rakhine State, the Central Committee for the Implementation of Peace and Stability and Development in Rakhine State was established with the State Counsellor as chair on 30 May 2016. The Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine State (UEHRD) was also formed in October 2017.

103. Myanmar signed the Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State with Bangladesh on 23 November 2017. According to the agreement, displaced persons can return voluntarily and safely to their original places of residence or to a safe and secure place nearest to it of their choice. Verification for return is based on simple procedures based on evidence of past residence in Rakhine State.

104. On 19 December 2017, Myanmar and Bangladesh signed the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Joint Working Group (JWG) on the Repatriation of Displaced Myanmar Residents from Bangladesh. On 16 January 2018, the two countries signed the Physical Arrangement for Repatriation of Displaced Myanmar Residents from Bangladesh under the Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State. According to the agreement, Bangladesh has to provide the list of and information on displaced persons who left Rakhine for Bangladesh after the 9 October 2016 and the 25 August 2017 attacks. The list has to be completed on the agreed forms by the potential returnees. Myanmar has to provide relevant information, including on resettlement plans, provision of livelihood assistance, access to basic services, and safely arrangements. Myanmar side has verified the lists received from Bangladesh and sent back the results for the implementation of the repatriation process.

105. An MoU between Myanmar and UNDP and UNHCR was signed on 6 June 2018. Under the MoU, UNDP and UNHCR will support Myanmar Government's efforts for the safe, dignified and voluntary return and relocation of displaced persons.

106. The Government is also assisting Internally Displaced Persons living in IDP Camps in Rakhine State, Kachin State, Kayin State and Shan State, in line with humanitarian norms. In this regard, respective ministries, Region and State governments and all organizations are cooperating. There are 17 IDP Camps in Rakhine State and humanitarian assistance has been given to them by the State Government, Department of Disaster Management, WFP and Relief International. To relocate the IDPs to safe and secure places, plans have been developed in Sittwe Township, Pauktaw Township and Kyaukpyu Township in Rakhine State.

107. There are 84 IDP Camps in Kachin State and humanitarian assistance is provided for them by the State Government, the Department of Disaster Management, Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF and well-wishers. Some IDPs are returning to their places of origin according to their wishes and the State Government is expediting their return. As of August 19 2020, there are 23 IDP Camps in Shan State and humanitarian assistance has been given to them by the State Government, the Department of Disaster Management, MRCS, WFP, ICRC and other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). There are 2 IDP Camps in Kayin State, Myaing Gyi Ngu area, and humanitarian assistance has been given to them by the State Government and the Department of Disaster Management, the Social Welfare Department and well-wishers. Vocational trainings for IDPs are aimed at gender equality and enhancing employment opportunities.

108. Humanitarian assistance, including food, infrastructure support, seeds, cash support as well as Cash for Work Programmes, have been provided to all communities residing in Maungdaw and Butheetaung Townships by the Red Cross Movement. Regarding education services, temporary schools have been built by UNICEF for 26,472 children from the IDP Camps in Rakhine and Kachin States. Facilities were provided for 500 out-of-school children to enable them to attend Non-formal Level-1 classes, and 551 children to attend Level-2 classes. A total of 497 volunteer teachers have been appointed in the IDP Camps and basic education schools in Rakhine State. In Maungdaw Township, construction of new school buildings, staff quarters and related tasks have been carried out under the supervision of the Rakhine State Government. Children from the IDP Camps are studying in these schools. At Hla Phoe Khaung reception centre for IDPs, necessary teaching aid equipment was provided for students. A playground and three school buildings have been constructed by UEHRD as well.

109. The Government adopted the National Strategic Plan for Resettlement of IDPs and Closure of IDP Camps in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. This strategy provided a framework for closing IDP Camps, rehabilitation and finding a solution that would end displacement. A national level committee was formed on 25 February 2020 to implement the strategy across the country.

#### **Combatting trafficking in persons**

110. Myanmar regards anti-trafficking in persons as a national cause and has been carrying out anti-trafficking activities under existing laws. Myanmar became a party to the

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, including TIP Protocol. Moreover, Myanmar is also a member of the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP).

111. In keeping with international norms and practices, Myanmar is drafting a new law to replace the existing Anti-trafficking in Persons Law. Myanmar has adopted and is implementing the Third Five-Year Plan of Action (2017-2021) for cooperation, prevention, prosecution and protection. Myanmar Police Force's Anti-trafficking in Persons Division has established 3 Sub-Divisions, 20 Task Forces, 60 Platoons, 3 Child Protection Units and 9 Platoons to strengthen efforts to combat the smuggling of migrants by land, air and sea. From 2017 to 2019, 670 trafficking in persons cases were investigated and action has been taken against 1129 perpetrators while 864 persons were involved as victims.

112. Meetings between the Myanmar Police Force and the Royal Thai Police (MPF-RTP) and between the Myanmar Police Force and Department of Special Investigation, Thailand (MPF-DSI) on Cooperation to combat trafficking in persons are held twice a year. The offices of Myanmar-Thai Border Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons (BCATIP) have been established. Myanmar also established the Myanmar-China Border Liaison Offices to cooperate in combatting trafficking in persons, and the Myanmar-China meetings are held once a year to cooperate in the combat against trafficking in persons.

## **L. Ceasefire and national reconciliation**

### **Recommendations 143.16, 143.17, 143.28, 144.29**

#### **Peace process**

113. The peace process is a priority of the present Government. The National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) chaired by the State Counsellor was established on 11 July 2016. The establishment of the NRPC is the first step towards national reconciliation and peace. The Peace Commission was also set up on 11 July 2016 not only to implement the policies laid down by NRPC but also to negotiate peace with Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs).

114. The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed by the Government and eight EAOs on 15 October 2015. It was approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 8 December 2015. The New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) signed the NCA on 13 February 2018.

115. The Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC), which was formed in accordance with the provisions of the NCA, has been engaging in political dialogue. The policy of the government is to open the dialogue to all stakeholders concerned that they might be included at all levels of the peace process. The UPDJC is chaired by the State Counsellor, with 48 members (16 representatives from the Government-Hluttaw-Tatmadaw group, 16 representatives from Ethnic Armed Organizations group, and 16 representatives from political parties group). Four meetings of Ethnic-oriented National Political Dialogues, three meetings of Region-based National Political Dialogues, two meetings of National Political Dialogues forum for Civil Society Organizations (CSO) have been successfully held in accordance with the basic guidelines, Terms of Reference (ToR) and topics to be discussed for political dialogues developed under the guidance of UPDJC.

116. The NCA contains 55 military provisions, directly related to the ceasefire agreement. To operationalize those provisions effectively, a mechanism, the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee, was established with the Tatmadaw, EAOs, and trusted and well-respected civilian representatives. The Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee at Union Level (JMC-U) held its first meeting from 29 to 31 October, 2015 in Yangon. Terms of Reference (ToR) for JMC and Military Code of Conduct (CoC) were approved at the Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting (JICM).

117. The Union Peace Conference - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong (1<sup>st</sup> Session) was held from 31 August to 3 September 2016 in Nay Pyi Taw with the aim of resolving political issues of 70 years standing through peaceful political means, and to create a political platform where

ethnic groups can express their opinions freely and openly. The Union Peace Conference - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong (2<sup>nd</sup> Session) was held from 24 to 29 May 2017 in Nay Pyi Taw. Likewise, the Union Peace Conference, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong (3<sup>rd</sup> Session) was held from 11 to 16 July 2018. Selected topics were discussed at the conference in sector and group sessions. The 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the Union Peace Conference was held from 19 to 21 August 2020. The decisions and agreements of the conference became Part 3 of the Union Accord.

118. To develop ethnic regions and to coordinate the effective use of the peace fund, the Joint Coordinating Body for Peace Process Funding (JCB) was formed. JCB is chaired by the State Counsellor and its members are representatives of the Government, NCA-Signatory EAOs and NCA Non-Signatory EAOs. The peace process fund was established with donations from international organizations and was utilized for four priority sectors, namely; nationwide ceasefire, negotiations and dialogues, peace-supportive development and the peace process of NRPC. Basic needs (food, shelter, and clothing) of ethnic people in conflict-affected areas are provided from the Union Budget, NRPC Fund, and contributions from local and international donors.

119. The Government is striving to achieve lasting and sustainable peace following the NCA path through informal and formal discussions with NCA Non-Signatory EAOs in order to build mutual trust and to work together under the umbrella of NCA.

#### **IV. Other activities**

120. To build up the peace process, the Tatmadaw unilaterally suspended all military activities from 21 December to 30 April 2019 for the first time, from 30 April to 30 June 2019 for the second time, from 30 June to 30 August 2019 for the third time, from 30 August 2019 to 21 September 2019 for the fourth time, from 10 May to 31 August 2020 for the fifth time and from 1 September 2019 to 30 September 2020 for the sixth time respectively.

121. The Complaint Mechanism Centres for workers' complaints are operating in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon to take urgent action on a 24 hours basis. From 2013 to 2018, 190 cases were received and resolved in a timely manner. Myanmar has established the following complaint mechanisms for the benefit of the people; the Committee for Complaint and Petition in the Pyithu Hluttaw, the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department in the President's Office, and the Committee for Scrutinizing the Complaints on Corruption in the Anti-Corruption Commission. Mechanisms for complaints to the ministries and the Union Coordinating Body for Rule of Law Centres and Justice Sector Affairs were also established.

122. To combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the National-level Central Committee for COVID-19 Prevention, Control and Treatment, chaired by the State Counsellor, was established. The Committee has carried out its activities nationwide through a people-centered approach. The Government has established the COVID-19 Recovery Fund with 100 billion Kyats to finance low-interest loans to the economic sectors in order to lessen the suffering from economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. To respond to any emergency situation of COVID-19 as and when it is necessary, in line with the Government policy, the National Volunteer Leading Group, led by the State Counsellor, was formed on 25 April 2020. This Group is intended to enable volunteers to participate systematically in the fight against COVID-19.

123. To reduce the hardships borne by citizens and households, the Government took a series of measures, including provision of food items and a monthly electricity tariff exemption for each household. The Government provides 40 percent of the social security fees of insured workers who have registered for social security benefits from factories and workshops that are temporarily closed to combat COVID-19 pandemic. The Government launched the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) on 27 April 2020; its goals are to provide fiscal support and monetary stimulus to reduce economic hardships, to improve economic sectors, to assist vulnerable workers and households and to improve health care systems.

## V. Conclusion

124. The democratically elected Government is striving for the emergence of a federal democratic union in Myanmar through development of democratic norms and standards, strengthening of democratic institutions and rule of law, justice, towards achievement of sustainable peace. It is achieving positive results despite severe challenges. There have been different foreign and domestic perceptions on the progress of the democratic transition in Myanmar. Freedom of speech, freedom of press, mobile phone penetration, internet access and robust social media are noteworthy signs of progress. To strike a balance between rights and responsibilities and between security and freedom is necessary in Myanmar, as elsewhere. Complaints on any violations of human rights by military personnel may be dispatched in person or in writing to the commander concerned without restrictions. In addition, complaints of human rights violations can be sent to the President's Office, Hluttaw Committees, the National Human Rights Commission and through the media. All those who are found guilty of human rights violations are convicted in accordance with the relevant laws. While the Government is still confronted with tremendous challenges, it is resolved to fulfill its promises with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights for everyone through its commitment to implement the UPR recommendations.

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