

## Press Release

At the invitation of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, H.E. Mr Don Pramudwinai, H.E. U Than Swe, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, attended an informal discussion on Myanmar, held on 18–19 June 2023 in Pattaya, Thailand, along with the Foreign Ministers, Special Envoy, Ambassadors and representatives from ASEAN Member States: Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, the Philippines and neighbouring countries: China and India.

Union Minister expressed his appreciation to friends of Myanmar for organizing informal discussion on Myanmar while welcoming suggestions to overcome challenges faced by Myanmar. At the time when correct information on Myanmar were blocked and one-sided news were spread by bias media, progress were analysed making reference to the ASEAN five-point consensus, he briefed the meeting on the development in Myanmar, particularly the implementation of three main tasks of the ASEAN five-point consensus; namely cessation of violence, inclusive political dialogue and provision of humanitarian assistance as these tasks complement Myanmar's Five-Point Road Map.

Union Minister elaborated on peace efforts by undertaking all necessary measures for the cessation of violence. Like many other countries in the region, Myanmar experienced insurgency during cold-war era. By 1974, it has managed to bring tranquility in 90% of the country's the in-land areas. In order not to damage the friendship with neighbouring countries, Myanmar exercised utmost constraints in managing the insurgency in border areas. Gentleman agreements were reached with almost all ethnic armed organization in post cold war era basically agreeing to carry out border development programme and peace process, and vowing not to commit offensive attacks and not to make new recruitments. Successive governments has been pursuing peace process for more than 33 years. Ceasefire in 1990 allowed 17 big EAOs and 17 small EAOs to operate in special zones covering about 3% of the border areas. As the dedicated Ministry was formed for the development of those areas, some EAOs trade arms for peace for good and about 10,000 armed personnel were transformed as Border Guard Forces–BGF and they are joining hands with the government ensuring peace and stability in respective areas. As of today, there are 18 EAOs and 10 of them signed the NCA and 8 are non-NCA signatories who continue to participate in peace negotiation. A total of 106 rounds of peace talks were held

under current government. As of now, peace talks are organized more than 5000 times. Important agreements were reached particularly for the building of a Federal Union through multiparty democratic system as well as for sharing of power and resources. Tatmadaw strictly follow the peace agreement not undertaking first strikes and not intruding to demarcated zones. Only in cases of NCA violation, intrusion to government control areas, expansion of bases in resource-rich areas and imposing threats to the public, counter attack are carried out with maximum restraints and in line with the Rule of Engagement in the Vienna Convention. Myanmar people value lives and never go to extreme. Despite the existence of armed struggles for 75 years since 1948, gun-death rate is the lowest in ASEAN region.

Union Minister explained that some EAOs takes advantage of the political instabilities in the past two years by training and equipping vulnerable and emotional youth in post-COVID-19 period as the PDFs even in the areas where stability was enjoyed for the past five decades. They do to attack security forces but they aim soft targets by killing and bullying unarmed people, members of opposition party, public service personnel and veterans and destroying public properties. Those armed groups emerged only after the announcement of the ASEAN five-point consensus. So-called NUG ministers order PDF for terror activities against those who do not follow the instruction for school and office closure by supporting arms and ammunition to PDF. To date, 5846 innocent lives were claimed by PDF including, 187 young children, 77 teachers, 69 Sanga, 807 village and ward administrators and 148 other public service personal, 17 medical service personnel, members of opposition parties, veterans. Such kind of brutal acts are not acceptable in any civilized society. Being responsible to protect its people, the government has to counter the attacks by the PDF. As an institution systematically organized with rich experience and capability, Tatmadaw can easily eliminate ordinary armed groups. However, it exercise utmost restraints not to hurt its own citizens. Government open its door for peace in order to solve domestic issues in an amicable manner. Amnesty is also announced giving pardons except to those with the records of serious crimes such as rapes and murders. All are allowed to participate in political process after coming to legal-fold. Political parties are also allowed to be formed and registered. As all the doors are opened for the cessation of violence and inclusive political dialogues, Union Minister explained that some EAOs do not cooperate wholeheartly in peace process as they don't wish to relinquish the benefits they are

gaining from illegal businesses of drug and armed smuggling. Also, some did not join the elections in all three times. As drug production become synthetic chemical based, eliminating drug issues become more challenging. Therefore, he stressed the need to promote cooperation with neighbours and ASEAN Member States.

On humanitarian front, the Union Minister underlined that the government will continue facilitating the works of AHA center. With regard to the repatriation of displaced person in Rakhine state, the government has been expediting early implementation of pilot project. Although there are some delays in the commencement of repatriation process as some potential returnees were threatened by some groups in the other side, Government will continue its efforts in cooperation with all relevant parties.

As the government has to address the issue of one-sided media attempting to destroy the country's image while blocking the true information in Myanmar, Union Minister called for greater cooperation from friends of Myanmar. Only through communication and engagement at all levels in ASEAN, ASEAN Member States can effectively support Myanmar to overcome challenging situation through proper analysis and judgment.

Union Minister continue to explain that there are some NLD members who wish to stay peacefully in the country in line with rules of law. Any democracy would not accept the election frauds of this scale, 29%, as experienced in 2020 general elections. Findings were disclosed to media and diplomats. NUG fail to solve the political issue through lawful and peaceful means by engaging in destructive activities. Myanmar had experience of similar organization, Nation Coalition Government of Union of Burma(NCGUB) 30 years ago. Although such groups raised funds and earn international supports by claiming for the cause of democracy, none of those people returned to country during the 10 years period of democracy and not even at the time of NLD administration. Most of those people merely aim for gaining refugee status, they don't consider much on the benefit of the people and gradually fading away from politics.

He highlighted that all enabling environment, such as granting amnesty, allowing party registration, are in place, anyone with sincere will to bring about benefits to the people can seek peaceful solution by participating in political process while denouncing terrorist activities.

He informed that the current government is carrying out all its duties and all the records of its activities under its administration are systematically kept for a systematic hand-over of the state responsibilities to winning party after general elections.

Union Minister continue to explain that the country's peace efforts over the past 33 years were done through dialogues rather than armed conflicts. During that period, some EAOs delayed peace process as they are not willing to relinquish high profits gained from illegal businesses including drugs. Successive government are pursuing peace patiently. Now a day, rates of armed attacks and drug smuggling are declining due to collaborative efforts of the government with the neighbouring countries. Some are returning to legal-fold.

Despite Myanmar being a resource rich country surrounded by five neighbours with 31 billion peoples and the country being situated at the hub of the world's biggest market with high development potentials, it continues to experience hardship for a long period due to external interference. Due to its geo-political and geo-strategic locations, successive Myanmar government has been upholding the principle of "peaceful co-existence" without interfering the internal affairs of other countries and have no issue with any countries in the world. Union Minister said Myanmar stands ready to receive good advice and suggestions from and promote cooperation with friends of Myanmar who realize real situation in Myanmar and the challenges of bias media on Myanmar.

The Union Minister concluded by expressing government's readiness to cooperate with all countries who can understand the real situation in the country as oppose to the wrong image portrayed by some bias media and disinformation campaigns.

Participants at the informal meetings expressed their adherence to non-interference in the internal affairs of Myanmar and their readiness to support Myanmar for peace, stability and inclusive political dialogues. They expressed their willingness to avoid ASEAN-minus formula looking forward to strengthened cooperation with Myanmar.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Nay Pyi Taw

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