

The United Nations in Myanmar calls for internet resumption in areas under shutdown in Rakhine State.

Yangon, 30 September 2019 -The United Nations in Myanmar urges the Government to end the shutdown of mobile internet services in Ponnagyun, Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, and Minbya Townships in Rakhine State. While welcoming steps taken to restore service to five out of the nine townships affected by the shutdown, the United Nations also notes that for those townships which remain cut off, the shut-down will have reached its 101st day on 30 September 2019.

Uninterrupted availability of the internet is indispensable and mobile internet services are a key enabler of the humanitarian and development work of the United Nations in Myanmar. The shutdown has therefore been a significant impediment to our work, complicating our ability to communicate in field locations, including with affected people. More broadly, the public in these areas, many of whom were already severely affected by the ongoing armed conflict in the area and by related constraints on humanitarian access, are facing additional difficulties related to the shutdown and in their daily lives.

The internet is critical for access to information and freedom of expression, which enable other fundamental human rights.

The shutdown is in contradiction to the principles and values of the Sustainable Development Goals, signed by the Government of Myanmar, which call for no one to be left behind, and has the potential to further undermine basic rights around access to food, education, health services and information.

The United Nations therefore calls on the Government of the Union of Myanmar to immediately resume internet services in the affected areas and to facilitate unhindered access for humanitarian organizations, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law.

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