

Issued on behalf of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General:

**Communication to the press after the official visit of the UN Special Envoy of the Secretary General
on Myanmar, Christine Schraner-Burgener, to Myanmar from 09.-18.07.2019**

Nay Pyi Taw, 18 July 2019

The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Myanmar travelled to the country from 9 to 18 July. In Yangon, she met with representatives of civil society, think-tanks, eminent personalities and INGOs, the UN country team and the diplomatic corps. She also met with religious leaders, members of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance and Development (UEHRD) and members of the former Rakhine Advisory Commission.

In Rakhine she travelled to Myebon and to Sittwe and visited IDP camps from both Rakhine and Muslim communities, as well as resettled Rakhine persons. She met with the representatives of civil society, political parties and members of parliament and the Rakhine State government. She also had discussions with the INGOs and with representatives of the resident UN agencies in Sittwe.

In Nay Pyi Taw, she met with various government officials, including the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; the Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye; the Union Minister of Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe; the Union Minister of Education Dr. Myo Thein Gyi; the Union Minister of the State Counsellor's Office U Kyaw Tint Swe; the Union Minister of International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin, and the Vice-Senior General Soe Win of the Tatmadaw . She also met with members of parliament, in particular, U Aye Tha Aung, the Deputy Speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) in his capacity as Chair of the Committee for Supporting Peace and Stability in Rakhine State (CSPSRS) together with some members of the Committee, and the Public Complaints Committees of the Amyotha Hluttaw and of the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House).

While welcoming the fact that the IDP Camp Closure Strategy had been finalised and was pending distribution, she regretted that for instance in Myebon, where over 80% of the IDPs have citizenship, their freedom of movement remained very limited. In her discussions, issues of security and divisions within and between the communities were raised. She repeatedly underlined the need to overcome them.

The meeting that she organised with over 40 women from different economic, social and political backgrounds all over Rakhine was a welcome interaction, where there were common but also differing experiences. She hopes to be able to continue organising such encounters to allow the members of the communities to meet and engage with each other, as a way of mending their fragile trust. Over all, she heard that in certain areas the interaction between the communities was slowly improving and encouraged this to continue.

The Special Envoy's mission focused on women, access to education and trust-building, as a path towards creating more harmonious cohabitation within Myanmar and contributing to conditions that would allow for the return of IDPs and refugees in safety, dignity and of their own free will to the places of their choice.

In Nay Pyi Taw, she had cordial and frank exchanges with a broad range of counterparts. The Special Envoy also briefed on her recent interactions with the General Assembly and the Security Council in New York.

She raised the question of access to tertiary education for poor students in Rakhine State and the need for continued engagement towards a ceasefire between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army. She also stressed the importance for all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law. She underlined a need for dialogue amongst and between all stakeholders: the Union Government, the Rakhine State Government, local political parties, civil society as well as the IDPs and refugees in Bangladesh, as she sensed a growing polarisation.

On the eve of the upcoming second anniversary of the events leading to the exodus of refugees to Bangladesh, she called for constructive engagement and efforts to reach out to the whole population. She also urged the government to stand strong against discrimination, hate-speech and the misuse of religion for political reasons. ENDS