Permanent Representative of Myanmar stresses the need of Special Rapporteur to strictly adhere to the principles of independence, impartiality and integrity and to avoid bias reports and non-constructive statements

AN INTERACTIVE Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar was held on 11 March 2019 during the 40th Session of the Human Rights Council, held in Geneva from 25 February to 22 March 2019.

During the dialogue, the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar presented her report on the situation of human rights in Myanmar to the Human Rights Council.

In response to the Special Rapporteur's biased report and unconstructive remarks on Myanmar, U Kyaw Moe Tun, Permanent Representative of Myanmar to United Nations, made a rebuttal Statement as a concerned country. In his statement, Permanent Representative highlighted that human rights and inclusiveness are fundamental to successful transformation of Myanmar to a democratic society. He apprised the Council of the government's concerted efforts for sustainable peace and genuine national reconciliation, inclusive development, promotion of rule of law, democratic practices and good governance. He also underlined the visible progress in many areas including health, education, and on-going implementation of Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan 2018-2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Speaking about the peace process, the Permanent Representative informed the Council of the successful holding and the fruitful results of 3 sessions of the Union Peace Conference as well as 3 more sessions to be held by 2020.

He highlighted the measures taken in the economic sphere by promoting responsible investment with careful consideration of environment and social governance as well as the recent initiative of the government to amend the undemocratic provisions of the 2008 Constitution.

With regard to the situation of human rights in Myanmar, he said, despite numerous challenges and constraints, Myanmar will continue to do its best to take its primary responsibility to promote and protect the rights of all its people. In this regard, he apprised the Council of significant steps taken by the Government especially for the rights of children, women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Myanmar will submit its national report to the UPR third cycle in 2020. Being a state party to CRC, CEDAW, CRPD and ICESCR, Myanmar has set the target to sign the ICCPR this year. In addition, steps are being taken to enact legislations including the new Child Rights Law and the draft laws to address the issues of hate speech and violence against women.

He underlined the government's close cooperation with the Special Envoy, Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General and the opening of the office of Special Envoy in Nay Pyi Taw. He also touched on the setting up of National Committee to prevent the issue of six grave violations relating to the children and armed conflict as well as drawing of a national action plan to implement Joint Communiqué singed with Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict.

On the issue in Rakhine State, Permanent Representative explained recent outbreak of fighting ignited by the attacks of AA insurgents against police outposts which has further complicated the situation. He reiterated the government's commitments and explained efforts to find sustainable solution to bring peace, stability and development for all people, including the implementation of the recommendations of Kofi Annan's Advisory Commission.

With regard to the repatriation process, he stated Myanmar's readiness to receive verified returnees in accordance with the bilateral agreements with Bangladesh. Myanmar has informed Bangladesh side to resume the Joint Working Group Meeting in April to commence repatriation of verified displaced persons including 444 Hindus who are desperate to return of their volition. In this regard, the Permanent Representative questioned the Special Rapporteur whether she was aware that the displaced persons in the camps in Cox's Bazar repeatedly express their desire to return to Rakhine State.

Myanmar is working not only with the UNDP and UNHCR but also with ASEAN and regional partners to create conducive environment for the returnees.

While sharing Myanmar's concern over the plight of all affected communities due to violence triggered by coordinated attacks of ARSA against multiple security outposts in October 2016 and August 2017, he stressed that a campaign of terror was carried out by ARSA. The seeds of fear sown by ARSA led to massive displacement of people. Myanmar Permanent Representative rejected any call for referring Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC) but expressed the government's commitment to ensure accountability where there is credible evidence of human rights violation committed in Rakhine State. The Independent Commission of Enquiry, established by Myanmar Government, is investigating all alleged violations of human rights and atrocities. He stressed, "The Government is willing and able to address the accountability issue".

He further explained the position of Myanmar with regard to the current Special Rapporteur, Ms. Yanghee Lee, that Myanmar is obliged to discontinue its cooperation with her and requested the Council for her replacement. In spite of Myanmar's fullest possible cooperation, her failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and her clear lack of impartiality in the discharge of her mandate caused public resentment against her and led to unanimous decision of Parliament in July 2017 to deny her access to the country.

In this regard, the Permanent Representative emphasized the importance of constructive engagement and cooperation to promote and protect human rights. He stated, "Every independent mandate holder or mechanism created by the Council must strictly adhere to the principles of independence, impartiality and integrity." He urged the Council to take into account of each nation's particular circumstances such as its historical and cultural background, capacity constraints as well as challenges and complexities. Highlighting the importance of the accuracy of information in making a right policy decision, Permanent Representative stressed, "It is also equally important for a mandate holder to avoid any harmful acts such as bias reports, non-constructive statements that will affect the prevailing social cohesion and unity in a country".

He concluded by expressing Myanmar's determination to continue the journey towards a democratic federal union in which the value of human rights and democracy take firm root, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. — MNA ■

Myanmar, Bangladesh hold commanders meeting

A Myanmar-Bangladesh battalion commander-level meeting was held in a hall on the Bangladesh side near the Myanmar-Bangladesh friendship border bridge on 11 March.

Myanmar team led by No 1 Border Guard Police Force acting Police Lt. Col Kyaw Win Hlaing and Bangladesh team led by No 34 Border Guards Bangladesh Commander Lt Col Ali Haidur Ahamad attended the meeting, according to the news released by Myanmar Police Force. — GNLM ■

(Translated by TTN)

The meeting between two border guard forces of Myanmar and Bangladesh. **PHOTO: MPF**