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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

11 February 2013]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Situation of Rohingya and Kachin in Myanmar

The controversial Citizenship Law of 1982 continues to deny the 800,000 Rohingyas recognition as equal citizens. They suffer from discrimination by state agencies, restrictions on movement, land confiscations, forced labor, marriage; they are only allowed to have marry and have children by asking the authorities. They are denied birth certificates, suffer from illegal taxation and lack adequate medical coverage. In June 2012 violence escalated between the Muslim Rohingya and Buddhist Rakhine after a young Buddhist was killed by Muslims on 28 May 2012 and ten Muslim pilgrims were killed by Rakhine as a vengeance on 3 June 2012.

In October 2012 the violence escalated again when in four towns quarters where Rohingya reside were attacked and partly burned down. Shortly before, on 29 September 2012 12 Buddhist temples and 50 houses inhabited by Buddhists had been plundered and burnt down. The government of Bangladesh accused Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. It is now estimated that the Rohingya were not responsible for the acts of 29 September 2012. However, violence ensued in Rakhine State: 4,800 houses and 17 mosques were destroyed. 109 people were killed. Instead of protecting people the security forces sided with Rakhine. The human rights organization Human Rights Watch accused the Myanmar authorities to play down the extent of violence and damage.

At least 115,000 Rohingya and Rakhine had to flee since June 2012. In the city of Sittwe entire neighborhoods have been ethnically cleansed. No Rohingya now live there any longer. The United Nations warned of catastrophic conditions in many refugee camps and called on the government of Myanmar to allow aid workers free access to the camps. But the situation of the Rohingya will not improve significantly as long as Myanmar's government is not willing to acknowledge the members of the minority as equal citizens. Several appeals from the ASEAN nations urge Burma to finally recognize the Rohingya as citizens with equal rights.

Kachin State

Several villages were burnt down or attacked with grenades by soldiers of the Myanmar army in January 2013. Three civilians, among them a child, were killed when the army bombarded Laiza, a town near the border to the People's Republic of China. The army did not allow for a humanitarian corridor to the civilian population. Since the end of a ceasefire that had lasted 17 years in June of 2011 fights between the army and the Kachin group "Kachin Independence Army" escalated. More than 75,000 members of the ethnic minority fled. Soldiers of the army of Myanmar are accused of rape, arbitrary shootings of civilians, pillage and other war crimes in Kachin. Even after talks between the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) were held in the People's Republic of China in February 2013, fighting in Kachin continued.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to urge the Government of Myanmar to:

- End human rights violations against the Rohingya minority,
- Revoke the 1982 citizenship and grant the Rohingya full and equal citizenship;
- Allow for humanitarian aid to reach all refugees in the country;
- Work for a reconciliation with all ethnic minorities;
- Allow for an independent investigation into war crimes.