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*Permanent Representative
No. 13 / 3-27/ 91*

11 January 2018

Dear Special Rapporteurs,

I would like to refer your letter no. UA MMR 8/2017 of 23 August 2017, with regard to the food security situation in the north of Rakhine State. In this connection, I have the honour to convey the information I received from the authorities concerned on the aforementioned matter, as attached.

Please accept, Madams and Sirs, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Warm regards,

(Htin Lynn)

Ambassador and Permanent Representative

Ms. Yanghee Lee

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

Ms. Hilal Elver

Special Rapporteur on the right to food

Mr. Léo Heller

Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation

Mr. Fernand de Varennes

Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Mr. Philip Alston

Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

**Information received from the Ministry of Home Affairs
in response to the food security situation
in the north of Rakhine State**

1. Additional general and overall information and comment

- The allegations are one-sided and based on no proper on-ground assessment. Whosoever, regardless of race, religion and status, living in the country in line with the existing laws of Myanmar shall enjoy equal rights without any discrimination.
- However, some Muslims living in the north of Maungdaw are not participating in the process of National Verification and issuance of NVC card with the intention of establishing a separate territory for them in Rakhine State.
- Therefore, the issue should be handled with paramount attention for the security of the State and South East Asia region as well as for the international security.

2. Measures to overcome hunger and malnutrition and realize food security for all

- In the northern part of Maungdaw, food production is sufficient for its populace as there are a total of 292,721 acres of farmland, 1,724 acres of palm land, 23 acres of fish pond and 15,331 acres of prawn farming pond.
- Therefore, the allegation that 7,568 children are suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition in the first half of 2017 is just a fictional number and there has been no systematic and on-ground assessment. No report has also been received regarding the signs and symptoms of Severe Acute Malnutrition.
- In education sector, 395 schools are being opened in the northern part of Maungdaw with 2,703 teachers from the Ministry of Education. Until 25 August 2017, a total of 182,453 Muslim students were able to access their formal education in Maungdaw area.

3. Measures to ensure the adequacy and availability of food and drinking water in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of people

- As of the data received before 25 August 2017, World Food Programme (WFP) was allowed to provide 2043.082 tons of food and nutrition every month to the villages in Maungdaw region.
- In the same way, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health and Sport signed the MoU and INGOs were allowed to operate in the process of providing access to clean drinking water.

4. Step to ensure that people's existing access to food and means of obtaining food is respected and protected

- In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 25 August 2017, Maungdaw Region Management Committee has provided food and health care services to Muslim villages in the affected area while the Red Cross Movement has provided food and medicine to the remaining Muslim villages in the region.
- In addition, rice and food donated by Indonesia and Turkey were handed over to Rakhine State government and then distributed to the Muslim villages through the supervision of Maungdaw Region Management Committee.
- Although there is no prohibition of fishing in the region, the trawler and fisherman must be registered. National Verification Card (NVC) is required in the registration process.
- Some Muslims in the region refused to acquire the National Verification Card (NVC) for them. This document is required to determine the origin of people who came ashore after fishing out in the sea. No particular registration or license is needed for fishing.

5. Measures to address the malnutrition situation in northern Rakhine

- Measures are being taken by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

6. Information on existing mechanisms to collect and assess relevant and disaggregated data on the enjoyment of the right to food and the human rights to water and sanitation by all

- The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and Rakhine State Government are making necessary arrangements for the provision of clean water and sanitation as well as access to food for Muslim villagers who are living in their villages peacefully.

- Moreover, international aids and assistances are being provided sufficiently to the villages through Red Cross Movement.
- 7. Information on whether a nutritional surveillance system and water quality surveillance system for early warning and interventions exists**
- Measures are being taken by the Ministry of Health and Sports.
- 8. Measures to address malnutrition affecting children and pregnant and lactating women**
- The Ministry of Health and Sports is addressing the issue. Rakhine State government has distributed nutritious biscuits and vitamins donated by Indonesia to the villages through Maungdaw Region Management Committee.
 - Moreover, in order to avoid food shortage, Myanmar Red Cross and ICRC have been providing rice, oil, beans, salt, fish paste, chilies, goods and medicines to Maungdaw Food Warehouse regularly.
- 9. Information on the main causes for the sharp increase of food insecurity in Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships in the last six months.**
- As there are 292,721 acres of farmland, 1,724 acres of palm land, 23 acres of fish pond, 15,331 acres of prawn farming pond and livestock farming in Maungdaw and Buthidaung, food supply adequately covers the demand of the population in the region.
 - Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, paediatrics, doctors, experts from the Ministry of Health and Sport and concerned authorities conducted several field visits to the region. However, no evidence of malnutrition and food shortages was found.
- 10. Information on the specific measures taken and envisaged to ensure that UN humanitarian agencies and other international and national humanitarian partners, have unrestricted access to northern Rakhine to conduct needs assessments and provide humanitarian assistance and that individuals and communities have safe access to humanitarian aid without fear reprisals.**

- As the situation in Maungdaw has returned to normalcy, the international humanitarian agencies are permitted to resume their works in the region.
- There has been certain limitation in the provision of humanitarian aids as the ARSA terrorist group destroyed bridges and roads, and planted landmines in many places.
- For the prevention of the recurrence of violence in Rakhine State, as well as for the security and systematic distribution of the humanitarian assistance, the State government has taken the following measures in supervising the visits of international organizations in Rakhine State;
 - (a) Measures taken to ensure that the INGOs which will provide assistance in Rakhine State signed MoU with the concerned Ministries;
 - (b) Measures taken to ensure that the assistance will be provided in line with the rules and regulations agreed upon with the concerned Ministries;
 - (c) Measures taken to ensure that the visits take place after the work plan and activities were submitted to the State Government Coordination Committee for permission so as to avoid unnecessary conflicts;
 - (d) Measures taken to ensure that in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 25 August 2017, the International Organizations provide humanitarian assistance under Government -led Mechanism or in partnership with Red Cross movement.

11. Information on measures to ensure freedom of movement, to review and lift restrictions, to ensure that security operations do not impede access to livelihoods, agricultural lands, forests and fishing grounds and markets

- Permissions have been given to Muslims who are living in Maungdaw region to travel freely within the Rakhine State in accordance with the rules and regulations.
- Permissions have also been granted to visit Yangon and other cities for medical treatment.

- Those who obey the existing laws and regulations enjoy freedom of movement and fishing in the sea.
- However, Muslims living in the northern part of Maungdaw have lost all of their rights as they refused to take part in the process of receiving National Verification Cards (NVC).
- Whosoever abiding by the laws and regulations of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, an independent and sovereign State shall enjoy the benefits.
