**Intervention on Anti-Hate Speech Law and Awareness, Social Cohesion and Press/ Media Freedom at 37th session of the UPR Working Group of Myanmar**

**(25 January 2021)**

**Madame President,**

1. I am Dr. Thida Tin, Deputy Director-General from the Ministry of Information.

2. I wish to explain the development of Anti- Hate Speech Bill and Awareness, Social Cohesion and Press/ Media Freedom.

3. To create harmony among different communities, the Government of Myanmar has launched a number of initiatives to prevent hate speech and promote social cohesion, mutual trust and confidence-building among all communities.

**Protection of Anti-hate speech**

4. The Protection against Anti-hate speech Bill has been under drafting process in line with the relevant international standards, existing laws and local needs without breaching the freedom of expression. The Office of the President also issued a directive on prevention of incitement to hatred and violence or prevention of proliferation of hate speech on 20 April 2020.

5. Since then, the Government has been working hard to educate people for proper use of social media by conducting awareness-raising campaigns through newspapers, TV channels, radios and websites.

6. The Union Election Commission, UNDP and UNESCO are also playing an important role in anti-hate speech programme. The Ministry of Information, in cooperation with UNESCO has been implementing the project on “Preventing hate speech and promoting peaceful society through Media and Information Literacy” to conduct trainings on staffs and local communities.

7. The Myanmar Press Council (MPC) has usually released the list of websites and social media pages which violated media ethics.

**Madame President,**

8. As social cohesion plays a vital role in establishing trust between diverse groups for building a peaceful and prosperous federal democratic nation. The Government has expanded its endeavours to foster social cohesion in a sustainable manner despite facing a situation where new challenges have emerged during the time of democratic transition.

9. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is planning to develop a National Framework for Social Cohesion to embrace the challenges. The Core Group has held a virtual coordination meeting on 14 December 2020.

10. The Government has spared no effort to bring about reconciliation and build trust and confidence among the communities residing in Rakhine State. Various activities such as social cohesion campaigns, trainings and community dialogues have been conducted with the support and cooperation of civil societies. A series of workshops were also held in close cooperation with the Centre for Diversity and National Harmony (CDNH) and the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC).

**Madame President,**

11. The Government is promoting media freedom and freedom of expression. Since the elimination of the Press Scrutiny Board in August 2012, print media was no longer subjected to pre-publication censorship. The number of publications has increased up to 2992 in December 2020. There were 349 news agencies as of December 2020. Daily regional news on different states and divisions are broadcasting in eleven ethnic languages on Myanmar Television.

12. In conformity with liberalization measures, we have amended the News Media Law to better protect press freedom. Amendments to this Law were discussed with relevant stakeholders including the Myanmar Press Council (MPC).

13. The Myanmar Press Council has resolved a total of 38 out of 162 complaints during October 2018 to March 2020. The MPC successfully intervened in 4 cases which were in criminal trial. Due to the intervention of MPC, Myanmar Tatmadaw dropped its charge against journalists from DVB and Eleven media group and also withdrew its lawsuits against the Irrawaddy’s Myanmar edition and Reuters News Agency. The Ministries of Defence and Home Affairs also withdrew 4 lawsuits and transferred them to MPC for resolution.

14. Regarding media access, we have already arranged altogether 36 media trips to the Rakhine State during 2016 to 2020.

15. The temporary internet suspension in some townships in Rakhine and Chin States is to prevent the destructive acts of the Arakan Army (AA) from exploiting mobile internet technologies. The Government has resumed internet service in some townships and information on COVID-19 is being shared among the public via SMS.

**Madame President,**

16. Since the beginning of the current administration, citizens including journalists and human rights defenders can enjoy the essence of democracy such as freedom of expression and freedom of press without fear of unlawful arrest. It is also the responsibility of all citizens to obey the prevailing laws of Myanmar.

17. I thank you.

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