

Speech by

Ambassador Marc Pecsteen, Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the United Nations

Myanmar Briefing to the Security Council

New York, 28/2/2019

Mr President, Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank Ms Schraner Burgener for the information she provided and assure her of our support for her mission.

I would like to convey **three messages**: (1) the urgency of full humanitarian access; (2) the crucial importance of accountability for sustainable peace; and (3) the need to address the root causes of the conflict.

Firstly, we urge the Myanmar authorities to grant **full humanitarian access** to the relevant UN agencies. Almost a year has passed since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNDP/UNHCR and progress remains too slow. We call on the United Nations and other humanitarian partners to pay particular attention to the specific needs of women and girls every time humanitarian aid is assessed, planned and delivered and to make specialised medical and psychosocial services available to victims of sexual violence.

We commend the region for the initiatives it has taken. Belgium congratulates ASEAN in particular for the establishment of the AHA Centre: this organisation usefully complements multilateral efforts, such as those of this Council and the specialised United Nations agencies. I would also like to commend Bangladesh's solidarity with the Rohingya refugees.

Secondly, **the fight against impunity**. Just a few months ago, in this room, the Chairman of the United Nations fact-finding mission described the situation in Rakhine State as "ongoing genocide". The disproportionate actions of the Tatmadaw in August 2017 could constitute the most serious crimes under international law. These events took place in a climate of extreme discrimination against the Rohingya and should be credibly investigated and prosecuted without delay by the

competent authorities in Myanmar. I would like to recall that this Council is competent to refer these events to the ICC. If justice is not done, the issue will sooner or later come back to us. How can we expect refugees to return to a region in which criminals are kept in office and enjoy complete impunity?

Thirdly, Belgium stresses the need to **address the root causes of the conflict**, so that refugees can return safely, voluntarily, with dignity and in a sustainable manner. The recommendations of Kofi Annan's report provide clear guidance in this regard and we call for their urgent implementation. A peaceful and just situation is one in which human rights, including freedom of movement, are protected without discrimination. It is also a situation in which access to basic services is guaranteed. Finally, it is a situation in which equal access to full citizenship prevails. We welcome the signing of the Joint Communiqué on the Prevention of Conflict-related Sexual Violence and call on the government to implement its commitments. I would also like to stress the importance of freedom of expression and call for the release of the two Reuters journalists.

Mr President,

Belgium will continue to monitor closely the development of the situation on the ground. We encourage delegations that have influence over the Myanmar authorities to urge them to take the actions expected of them to help establish peaceful coexistence in Myanmar.

Thank you, Mr President.