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António Guterres
UN Secretary General

25 March 2019

Excellency,

We write to welcome your initiative to review United Nations operations in Myanmar, and to strongly urge you ensure that the review is open, transparent and that its findings and recommendations are made public.

Given the gravity of the abuses in Myanmar, the review offers an important opportunity to establish “whether everything possible to prevent or mitigate the unfolding crises was done, identifying lessons learned and good practices, making recommendations as appropriate, including on accountability, and enabling more effective work in the future”, as recommended by the International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar.¹ To this end, we urge you to ensure that:

- The review is open and transparent, and its terms of reference, final report and findings are made public;
- The review team has sufficient resources – human, financial and technical – to conduct its work. We encourage you to instruct all UN agencies to cooperate fully with the inquiry, including by providing access to relevant information and documents;
- The review team consults with a wide range of stakeholders, both inside and outside of Myanmar. Any current and former UN staff, as well as other organizations including INGOs and local NGOs, who provide information to the inquiry must be able to do so without risk of reprisal.
- The UN reaffirms its commitment to the Human Rights up Front initiative and takes immediate action to develop a comprehensive plan to more effectively mainstream human rights protection among all UN staff working on Myanmar, both in country and at headquarters. This should include detailed timelines for implementation, clearly identified indicators of successful implementation of the initiative, and the development of a plan for UN agencies to warn the UN Security Council to prevent and respond to serious human rights violations.

As you know, a similar inquiry was undertaken in 2012 on events in Sri Lanka. The public report that came out of that inquiry set an important precedent, and sent a strong message on the UN’s commitment to transparency and accountability within its own system. It also led to the Human Rights up Front initiative, which was an important step towards strengthening the UN’s human rights pillar and making the body more responsive during crises. We believe that the review on Myanmar offers an important opportunity to assess progress since 2012 and to look at the UN system as a whole to ensure that it is fit for purpose and able to respond quickly and effectively to prevent grave abuses. At a time when the protection and promotion of human rights around the world is under increasing threat, a strong, transparent, effective, and accountable UN is essential. We would be happy to discuss these important issues with you further.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurance of our highest consideration,

Yours sincerely,

Veronique Andrieux
Chief Executive Office
Action Against Hunger

Debbie Stothard
Coordinator
ALTSEAN-Burma

Kumi Naidoo
Secretary General
Amnesty International

Thomas Hughes
Executive Director
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John Samuel
Executive Director
Asian Forum for Human Rights
and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Anna Roberts
Executive Director
Burma Campaign UK

¹ Report of the detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, A/HRC/39/CRP.2, 17 September 2018, para. 1706.

Caroline Kende-Robb
Secretary-General
CARE International

Meg Gardinier
Secretary General
ChildFund Alliance

Dimitris Christopoulos
President
FIDH – International Federation for
Human Rights

Matthew Smith
Chief Executive Officer
Fortify Rights

Simon Adams
Executive Director
Global Centre for the Responsibility
to Protect

Akila Radhakrishnan
President
Global Justice Center

Kenneth Roth
Executive Director
Human Rights Watch

Saman Zia-Zarifi
Secretary General
International Commission of Jurists

Abdul Malik Mujahid
Chairman
Justice for All/ Burma Task Force

Winnie Byanyima
Executive Director
Oxfam International

Helle Thorning-Schmidt
Chief Executive Officer
Save the Children International

Adrienne Lapar
Program Director
Watchlist on Children and Armed
Conflict

Sarah Costa
Executive Director
Women's Refugee Commission