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UNGA THIRD COMMITTEE

23 October 2018

Item 74: Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Gillian Bird Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Australia thanks the Special Rapporteur for her report.

The report underlines the serious human rights challenges in Myanmar and the need for ongoing international engagement and assistance.

Australia will continue to support Myanmar's efforts to achieve a long-term and durable solution to the crisis in Rakhine State, and to consolidate democracy after fifty years of military rule.

We call on Myanmar to restore cooperation with the Special Rapporteur without delay and to maintain cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Australia shares the Special Rapporteur's serious concerns about the grave human rights violations perpetrated against the Rohingya, as well as ongoing severe restrictions on the freedom of movement of those Rohingya who remain in Rakhine State, and their ability to access livelihood opportunities and health and education services. We address this further in our statement on the UN Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar, also in this agenda item.

We are concerned, also, by ongoing fighting, displacement and restrictions on humanitarian access in other parts of Myanmar, particularly Shan and Kachin states.

We urge all parties to bring an end to the fighting, protect civilians and allow safe and unfettered access to humanitarian actors to provide assistance to affected communities.

Australia welcomes progress in political dialogue between signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, including agreement on 14 additional basic federal principles at the most recent session of the *Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong*.

We welcome, also, the recent high-level summit of parties to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and parallel efforts to engage non-signatory groups with a view to bringing them into the formal political dialogue process.

A free and independent media is a vital pillar of democracy.

Australia acknowledges progress since 2011, but we are concerned by ongoing constraints to media freedom, including the arrest of journalists from Reuters.

Australia is concerned by their ongoing detention and notes that their early release would signal important support for the democratic principle of media freedom.

Australia reiterates its commitment to supporting Myanmar in its efforts to address ongoing human rights challenges, achieve national peace and reconciliation, and transition to full democracy.