



Australian Government

Statement from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Women

Thank you Deputy Secretary Biegun, Lord Ahmad, Commissioner Lenarčič, and High Commissioner Grandi for bringing us together today to draw attention to this humanitarian crisis in the Indo-Pacific region.

During my visits to Bangladesh and Myanmar I was moved to see firsthand the complexity and scale of need - where over 2.4 million people require humanitarian assistance. Australia is deeply concerned for those affected – and we know COVID-19 will exacerbate existing inequalities and hardships. At the outset, let me acknowledge the generous efforts of the Government and communities of Bangladesh in hosting the large numbers of displaced Rohingya.

Australia remains committed to sustaining our humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya and other crisis-affected communities in Bangladesh and Myanmar, having provided over \$260 million [*\$100m in 2019/20*] since 2017 for food assistance, clean water, health and sanitation, education, counselling services for women and girls, and efforts to respond to the impacts of COVID-19.

I commend the important work of international and local humanitarian agencies delivering life-saving assistance to impacted communities and responding to COVID-19 across the region. Assuring full and safe access for humanitarian actors is critical and I encourage all authorities to ensure this. We also stand ready with other donors to support the Government of Bangladesh to consider opportunities for programs that build the self-reliance and resilience for the Rohingya that will help prepare for voluntary returns to Myanmar when it is safe to do so.

It is also vital that accountability for human rights violations be realised for there to be any durable solution to the crises in Rakhine and Chin states and to bring justice for the Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar.

Australia remains committed to supporting all conflict-affected communities and working with the Government of Myanmar, the Government of Bangladesh, regional governments, ASEAN and the international community to support a long term and durable solution to this crisis to allow for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of all displaced persons.