



ICRC

[Mr/Madam Chairman]

I would like to express - on behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross - our appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this platform.

More than 3 years after the August 2017 crisis, the ICRC remains one of the few international organizations with extensive operations addressing emergency and protection needs of Muslim communities in Rakhine State. For instance, the ICRC - in cooperation with its partners from the RC/RC Movement - reaches approximately 80,000 people each month with vital food assistance in Northern Rakhine. In late April, it has also launched a comprehensive action plan aiming at supporting the Myanmar authorities in their efforts to prevent and mitigate the effects of COVID-19 in some of the most vulnerable areas of Rakhine, with intervention in health facilities, quarantine centers, IDP camps and host communities.

Meanwhile, the ICRC is also working on the frontlines of another active armed conflict between the Myanmar Armed Forces and the Arakan Army, a conflict that has regrettably not seen a reprieve in the face of the recent COVID-19 outbreak, threatening all communities and having displaced over 115.000 persons since January 2019.

It is particularly concerning that the combined negative effects of the ongoing armed hostilities and the spread of COVID-19 led the ICRC – over the past 24 months - to partially put on hold or downsize programs aiming at ensuring better access to essential services and improving livelihoods of

the Muslim communities in Rakhine to refocus on emergency life-saving distribution and critical COVID-19 response.

Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, the lack of any positive perspective for both the Muslim communities living in camps and for the host population has aggravated a sense of hopelessness, especially among youth. This desolation, coupled with dire economic and living conditions, and aggravated by the COVID-19, fuels the risk of increased violence in the camps.

It has also triggered increased migration - especially for minors - often in unseaworthy vessels, leading to loss of life, abuse by traffickers, people going missing and family separation. In this respect, I would like to highlight the obligation to render assistance to persons in distress or in danger of being lost at sea, and the obligation of coastal states to cooperate to ensure that people rescued at sea are delivered to a place of safety where their basic human needs can be met, with the least possible delay. Capacity and ability to identify the dead is also of the utmost importance to prevent future missing cases and to fulfil the need to know the fate of their loved ones.

The ICRC reiterates in this platform its commitment to continue assistance and protection activities in favor of displaced Muslim civilian populations and host communities, notably the wounded and sick, people deprived of freedom, and families separated due to the armed conflicts. Similarly, it reaffirms its commitment to promote respect for International Humanitarian Law, which would certainly contribute to improve the conditions for voluntary, safe and dignified returns of Muslim populations displaced in Bangladesh.

Against this dire humanitarian situation, the ICRC also appeals to States to:

- Support programs both in Myanmar and Bangladesh that contribute to address the economic situation in the camps and in the host communities and that assure the provision of essential services;
- Support programs that aim at countering violence against children, child labor, exploitation and abuse, child marriage and trafficking, both in the camps and in the host communities;
- Prevent migrants from going missing, facilitate the search for them, address the needs of the families and explore alternatives to detention.

Thank you for your attention.