

United Nations



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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**REMARKS BY UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS
AND EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR, MARK LOWCOCK**

At the Rohingya Pledging Conference

A Virtual Event, 22 October 2020

As delivered

Thank you very much indeed. Thank you for the co-hosts for bringing us all together.

As it has been said, more than three years after nearly three quarters of a million of Rohingya people were forced to flee from brutal violence, they remain unable to return to their homes in Myanmar. This is the largest stateless community in the world.

And today's conference sends a message to them and to their generous host- the host communities that the world has not forgotten them.

I would like to make five quick points building on what Filippo [UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi] just said.

Firstly, the United Nations and its partners have, with limited resources, continued to support more than a million refugees in Bangladesh, as well as hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis in the host communities. COVID-19 has made it more difficult, but it has not stopped the aid community reaching people in need.

Thanks to early action indeed, and donor support, and the leadership of the Government of Bangladesh, it has so far been possible to contain the spread of COVID in Cox's Bazaar.

Secondly, it is very important to recognize that the Rohingya refugees themselves have been the backbone of the response. They volunteer as health workers, they distribute masks and they help protect their communities from the pandemic. And I think we are all need to be very grateful to them and encourage them to take up this kind of responsibility.

Third, let us not forget that there are still some 600,000 Rohingya inside Myanmar. A 130,000 of them remain displaced in central Rakhine State where they have been since 2012, and another 10,000 have been displaced since 2017 in northern Rakhine. Those people continue to have their basic rights denied, they suffer extreme hardships in Rakhine State and elsewhere.

These people in Myanmar remain among the most vulnerable, including vulnerable to COVID-19. Movement restrictions have severed their already restricted access to healthcare, education and livelihoods.

We are alarmed by the escalating armed conflict in Rakhine, which continues to displace, maim, and kill members of all communities. Reports of the risks many Rohingya are willing to take in the hands of people smugglers are a tragic testament to the hardships they faced at home.

Fourthly, I want to recall what the Secretary-General has consistently said: the root causes of the suffering of the Rohingya people, both inside and outside Myanmar, can only be addressed by the Myanmar's authorities. They accepted and committed to the recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission. But unfortunately, three years later, we see too little real progress on critical reforms on the ground.

The starting point for improving the situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar is to ensure their freedom of movement, to ensure their access to services, and to build their capacity for self-reliance. The humanitarian community also needs to have access to meet their urgent needs.

And lastly, we are grateful for the willingness of regional actors to share the burden.

The Bangladesh Government and communities have been the most remarkable, generous, wonderful hosts, but they themselves face challenges and have limited means. And as Filippo just said, we need to focus on solutions that meet international standards. We have to help refugees become more resilient, self-reliant, but also helping host communities to do the same thing.

Again, as Filippo said, our response plans for this crisis have up to this year relatively well funded. Thank you all of you for that. But that is not the case in 2020. Today, we hope will enable us to continue to meet people's need. There is an urgent need for about more than \$550 million dollars. That needs to start to be met by the pledges we have already today.

We are counting on all donors and partners to make a collective effort to meet the gap. We have ensure that an entire generation of Rohingya children are not left without a future.

Thank you.