

**Statement by His Excellency Mr. Vijavat Isarabhakdi  
Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand  
at the Donor Conference on  
“Sustaining Support for the Rohingya Refugee Response”  
Thursday, 22 October 2020**

**Distinguished Co-Chairs,  
Excellencies,  
Dear Colleagues and Friends,**

1. On behalf of the Kingdom of Thailand, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the co-hosts. We lend our support to this virtual conference and its commendable objective to maintain the momentum of support for the Rohingya displaced persons. Given their increased vulnerability within the current context of COVID-19, sustaining such support is a collective responsibility.

2. The situation in Rakhine State remains a complex one. It continues to require patience, time, cooperation and support from all relevant stakeholders and partners. In addition to dialogue and negotiation to resolve the deep-seated differences among communities, persistent attention to addressing the **root causes** and **development gaps** is key to reaching sustainable and comprehensive solutions.

3. Over 800,000 displaced Rohingyas are now temporarily living in Cox’s Bazar. This represents an additional burden to an already untenable situation, particularly for the host country, Bangladesh -- a country that should be applauded for this humanitarian stance. In Thailand’s view, there are **three key elements** that are essential for immediate to medium-term actions.

**First**, the existing **bilateral mechanism** between Myanmar and Bangladesh must be encouraged to progress concretely on repatriation efforts once the pandemic subsides. **UNHCR’s catalytic role** will help in this regard, and we urge the UNHCR to focus its efforts on addressing decisive obstacles, such as fear of return of the displaced Rohingyas, in addition to implementing its Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) through the tripartite MOU with UNDP and the Myanmar Government.

**Second**, any further delays significantly increase the need for humanitarian assistance. Thailand thoroughly understands such needs and we understand that the consequences are immediate. We have therefore, as much as we can, provided Myanmar and Bangladesh with **cash-based donations**, through organizations such as WFP, WHO, UNHCR, IOM and ICRC, to complement the efforts of these important organizations in the provision of basic necessities such as food and medicines.

**Third**, Thailand is implementing projects aimed at addressing the root causes and closing the development gaps through the Thailand–Myanmar Development

Cooperation Framework (2019-2021), which includes projects in Rakhine State. We are focusing on five key sectors that, we firmly believe, will have concrete and lasting impact. These sectors include education, agriculture, health, economic and financial development, and sustainable community development. In our view, these areas of cooperation will strengthen the foundation for sustainable development, peace and prosperity in Rakhine State.

3. But beyond these three essential immediate to long-term actions, there is much more that we can all **explore** within the region. In 2019, during Thailand's term as ASEAN chair, we were of the view that ASEAN could, and should, play a more visible and enhanced role in supporting Myanmar by providing humanitarian assistance and promoting sustainable development in Rakhine State. This view has carried on through the continued efforts of the current ASEAN Chair, Viet Nam, to maintain and build on ASEAN's continued attention and support to Myanmar on this issue. As a result of all these efforts, Thailand is supporting the implementation of three priority projects based on the **ASEAN Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA) recommendations**, namely: (a) the provision of biometric machines at reception and transit centres; (b) the provision of agricultural equipment; and (c) the renovation of fish and shrimp ponds in Rakhine State.

4. Beyond ASEAN, there is also scope for engaging other **regional mechanisms**. The **Bali Process** is one such mechanism with a great deal of expertise and added value that can augment our common efforts to deal with people smuggling and human trafficking. We encourage countries to explore ways to support the work of the Bali Process in assisting the Rohingyas, for instance, through its Task Force on Planning and Preparedness (TFPP), which was established with the specific purpose of preparing for large influxes of irregular migrants, including **migrants at sea**.

**Excellencies,  
Dear Colleagues,**

5. Irregular migration is a regional challenge. It requires dialogue, cooperation and partnership to address the issue effectively and comprehensively, under the principle of **international responsibility sharing**. Thailand appreciates the contributions made by stakeholders and donor countries to our common efforts. We look forward to deepening our partnerships on this issue and exploring new ones with you all.

6. I thank you.

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