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## ORAL STATEMENT

Item 4: Interactive dialogue on the report of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

### GOVERNMENTS AND BUSINESSES MUST UNITE IN ACTION TO PREVENT FURTHER BLOODSHED AMID DEEPENING HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE IN MYANMAR

UN Human Rights Council  
Forty-eighth regular session  
13 September – 8 October 2021

Madam President,

We thank the High Commissioner for her update and share her concerns over the ongoing human rights and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.

As the gaze of the international community shifts away, the crisis in Myanmar continues to spiral, resulting in untold crimes and human suffering across the country.

In the seven months since the coup, the Myanmar military has killed over 1,100 people and arbitrarily detained more than 6,600 individuals for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma). We are deeply concerned by the rise of surveillance and censorship, including the continued attacks on media workers<sup>1</sup> and those who speak out against the coup, blocking of websites, introduction of a ban on use satellites dishes and resumption of internet shutdowns in parts of the country.

Armed violence is intensifying across Myanmar, both in ethnic minority areas long affected by armed conflicts and in the broader central and urban areas, reportedly resulting in heavy civilian casualties and massacres. There are about 206,000 internally displaced this year alone.<sup>2</sup>

This comes on top of existing human rights challenges, including related to Covid-19. Communities across the country have been devastated by a surge in Covid-

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/05/myanmar-cease-persecution-journalists/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-snapshot-september-2021>.

19 cases, including in overcrowded prisons, amid a shattered health care system,<sup>3</sup> severe flooding, and a contracted economy<sup>4</sup> resulting in job losses particularly affecting women.<sup>5</sup>

Madam President,

The international community has a responsibility to protect the people of Myanmar, prevent further atrocities and violations, and ensure civilian protection and humanitarian access.

The international community must not look the other way but must take long overdue action to hold perpetrators to account for international crimes, including by referring the situation in Myanmar to the ICC and exercising universal and other forms of jurisdiction to investigate suspected perpetrators. This Council must continue to follow the situation closely and to pressure the Myanmar authorities to end human rights violations and impunity. States must also pressure the authorities to end violations by imposing targeted sanctions on senior officials reasonably suspected of committing human rights violations and serious crimes and a comprehensive global arms embargo on Myanmar.

Local and multinational businesses operating in Myanmar must respect human rights and stop enabling perpetrators. They must conduct heightened human rights due diligence and if they are unable to address the human rights impact of their operations, they must responsibly end their business relationships – severing business ties, for instance, with Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL), its subsidiaries and joint ventures.

Madam High Commissioner,

What additional practical steps should states take to ensure that companies remaining in Myanmar are not complicit in the commission of international crimes?

Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/07/myanmar-covid-19-surges-overwhelming-shattered-healthcare-system-2/>.

<sup>4</sup> Myanmar Economy Expected to Contract by 18 Percent in FY2021: Report (worldbank.org), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/07/23/myanmar-economy-expected-to-contract-by-18-percent-in-fy2021-report>.

<sup>5</sup> ILO assessment: ILO estimates reveal heavy job losses in the first half of 2021 in Myanmar, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/07/23/myanmar-economy-expected-to-contract-by-18-percent-in-fy2021-report>.