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United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA)

**MEDIA STATEMENT
27 SEPTEMBER 2017**

Statement on the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh

The UNAA calls on Australia to intensify diplomatic efforts to help resolve the Rohingya tragedy in Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The UNAA supports the request by the Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, for the Security Council to take urgent action to end the violence against Rohingya Muslims in Northern Rakhine State in Myanmar, and to prevent the further exodus of Rohingyas into Bangladesh.

The UNAA applauds the efforts of the UN humanitarian agencies who are working hard to alleviate the suffering of the Rohingyas on the ground. The UNAA supports the call from the UN for Member States to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya who have fled, and to the displaced communities still in Rakhine State.

The UNAA acknowledges the efforts of Myanmar Red Cross and the ICRC who are providing humanitarian aid, and notes the disruption to the ICRC's efforts by local people, who claim that the international community favours the Rohingya.

The UNAA recognises the entrenched nature of the conflict in Rakhine State characterised in the Rakhine State Advisory Commission's report (chaired by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan) that lays bare the human rights, development, political and security crises besieging Rakhine State.

The UNAA notes that this crisis is not new, with complex historical roots and systemic discrimination against Rakhine, Rohingya Muslims and others in Rakhine State. The UNAA acknowledges that in Myanmar the term Rohingya is neither used nor accepted as one of Myanmar's recognised ethnic nationalities.

The UNAA recognises that the current crisis unfolding has its roots in the events of 2012, the military induced segregation of communities, and last October's armed attacks on the border guards led by a new insurgency movement called the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA).

United Nations Association of Australia

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The UNAA applauds the efforts of the Australian Government - that has bipartisan political support - exhorting the Myanmar Government to cease the violence, and welcomes Australia's further commitment of humanitarian aid. Noting the gravity of the situation, Foreign Minister Bishop recently said, "We call for restraint by the Myanmar authorities, for the protection of civilians, and for unfettered access to be granted to humanitarian workers." The UNAA welcomes Australia's recent addition in aid to affected Rohingya communities in Myanmar and Bangladesh, amounting to over \$50 million since 2012. More broadly, the UNAA stands with the Australian Government in supporting the transition process underway in Myanmar, through Australia's official development assistance (ODA) with a strong emphasis on education, peace and governance.

However, as was the case in Cambodia in the early 1990s, the UNAA believes that Australia is well-placed to take a leading role in supporting UN diplomatic and humanitarian efforts for a structured support plan to stabilise and resolve the current situation in Rakhine State, and encourages the Australian Government to take more positive action working through the United Nations and closely with the Myanmar and Bangladesh authorities.

The UNAA recognises the extreme burden on Bangladesh with 700,000 Rohingya refugees now struggling to survive in that country, including more than 400,000 Rohingya from the current exodus, and calls on the United Nations Security Council to fully consider and work with the Myanmar authorities to establish safe zones within Myanmar.

The UNAA fully recognises that after 50 years of military rule the transition to democracy in Myanmar is fragile and that in accordance with the Constitution the current Government under Aung San Suu Kyi has no direct control over the military. The UNAA requests that the Secretary-General continues to use his good offices to reach out to the civilian and military arms of the Myanmar Government, to find a way to support the implementation of the Rakhine State Advisory Commission's recommendations.

Spokesperson available for comment

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About the UNAA

The UNAA is a nationwide civil society body that works on behalf of the central UN system to inform, inspire and engage all Australians regarding the work, goals and value of the UN to create a safer, fairer and more sustainable world.



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