

MEDIA ADVISORY: As Myanmar crisis enters third year, Special Envoy Heyzer urgently calls for international unity on humanitarian aid, stance on elections and civilian protection

BANGKOK, 31 January 2023 – The Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Myanmar Noeleen Heyzer today highlighted key areas for concrete action where greater regional and international unity can support a Myanmar-led process to end the violence and suffering and help Myanmar return to the path of democracy guided by the will of the people. In her urgent call, the Special Envoy focused on humanitarian aid without discrimination and through all available channels, a unified position on the military's plans for elections, and protection of civilians including both people inside Myanmar and refugees.

Over the past two years, the military's disruption of Myanmar's democratic transition has inflicted enormous damage on the country and people, and led to a multidimensional crisis spanning severe humanitarian, human rights and socio-economic consequences with serious regional ramifications. As of the end of last year, 15.2 million people were food insecure, more than 1.5 million internally displaced and an estimated 34,000 civilian structures had been destroyed since the military takeover. The Rohingya people in refugee camps and those remaining in the country, as well as other marginalized communities, are at heightened risk with 2022 marking one of the deadliest years for people forced to undertake perilous sea journeys.

The Special Envoy renewed the United Nations' solidarity with the people of Myanmar and the need for protection of all communities, which the United Nations Secretary-General reinforced in his recent statement. She reiterated the Secretary-General's concern regarding the military's stated intention to hold elections, which threatens to worsen the violence and instability in the absence of inclusive political dialogue and conditions that permit citizens to freely exercise their political rights without fear or intimidation.

The Special Envoy urgently calls for greater unity and commitment among the international community in three key areas:

First, the international community, and particularly donors and Myanmar's neighbours, must come together with humanitarian actors including local humanitarian networks to scale up urgently needed assistance to all those in need without discrimination and through all available channels. A commitment to increase levels of cross-border aid, along with more flexible banking and reporting rules, will facilitate humanitarian support to people most in need.

Second, the international community must forge a stronger unified position regarding the military's potential elections which will fuel greater violence, prolong the conflict and make the return to democracy and stability more difficult.

Third, the international community must implement measures to increase protection for civilians inside Myanmar as well as for Myanmar refugees in the wider region. Such measures could



include an on-the-ground monitoring mechanism as part of the implementation of ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus and its commitment to stop the violence in Myanmar, and regional frameworks for the protection of refugees and forcibly displaced people.

"It is inconceivable any form of peaceful and democratic transition can be initiated by those perpetrating harm on their own citizens," Special Envoy Heyzer said. "The violence has to stop, including the aerial bombings and burning of civilian infrastructure along with military's ongoing arrests of political leaders, civil society actors and journalists."

Guided by her ongoing consultations with women and youth, ethnic, political and community leaders, and refugee representatives, the Special Envoy is focusing on the following four areas: an Inclusive Humanitarian Forum; upscaling access to education for Rohingya refugees and host communities; regional frameworks for the protection of refugees and forcibly displaced people; and advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Myanmar.

Press contact: Jeremy Walden-Schertz, Media and Communications Officer,
jeremy.walden-schertz@un.org