



OIC ASG for Political Affairs and UN Special Envoy on Myanmar discuss the possibility of holding joint international conference to upscale education for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and the region, reinforcing calls for urgent international support

JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA 23 February 2023 – The Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Myanmar Noeleen Heyzer visited the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Headquarters in Saudi Arabia on 20 February and was received by H.E. Mr. Yousef Al-Dobeay, Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, to discuss the Special Envoy's proposal of holding a joint international conference this year in partnership between the OIC and the UN aimed at establishing and enhancing practical and longer-term pathways to upscale educational benefits to both Rohingya refugees and host communities.

The ASG appreciated the UN Special Envoy's practical approach at a time when concrete solutions were urgently needed and assured her of full cooperation and support from the OIC General Secretariat. He reaffirmed OIC's firm support for the Rohingya and called for the international community to take more responsibility to ensure the protection of basic rights, including the right to full citizenship, and to create conducive conditions for their voluntary, safe and dignified return. He expressed great concern about the deteriorating security, human rights and humanitarian situation in Myanmar and its adverse consequences for the Rohingya.

The ASG underscored that the Rohingya issue has been a constant item on the agenda of OIC with full Member State support and further apprised about the status of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) case filed by The Gambia, on behalf of OIC, against Myanmar.

The UN Special Envoy highlighted while it has been more than five years since the forced mass exodus from Rakhine State, the Rohingya continue to suffer desperate hardship, including in the recent announcement of ration cuts for Rohingya refugees resulting from a severe funding shortfall amid competing world crises.

The UN Special Envoy underlined that violence and constant fear from an uncertain future because of the lack of progress on addressing the root causes of marginalization has led Rohingya refugees to undertake dangerous sea journeys, with the past year being one of the deadliest. She highlighted interviews conducted with mothers, young women and youth from rescued boats all pointed to a single message: they want a future and education. In this context, she reinforced education is a powerful tool to transform lives, avoid a "lost generation" and enable the Rohingya to become leaders and contributors upon their return to Myanmar.

The Special Envoy reinforced the current situation is unsustainable and called for greater urgency and responsibility-sharing, recognizing Bangladesh's immense generosity in shouldering a disproportionate responsibility. While the conflict and instability make achieving conditions for safe and voluntary return difficult, there are clear areas now where meaningful progress can be made. In this regard, the ASG expressed his appreciation for her ideas and initiatives aimed at improving the conditions of the Rohingya refugees, indicating that consultations will be held with OIC Member States on this matter.

Both sides renewed their commitment to remain constructively engaged on the issue of the Rohingya.

Press contact: Jeremy Walden-Schertz, Media and Communications Officer

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar

jeremy.walden-schertz@un.org