

**Statement of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission on the 72nd
International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2020
Statement No. (15/2020)**

1. Today is the International Human Rights Day and the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) is, as in other countries around the world, celebrating this auspicious occasion to mark the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948. Since then, there have been profound developments in nations of the world in efforts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of their citizens.

2. The MNHRC finds this occasion most appropriate to reflect on its activities throughout this year and present to the Myanmar people what it has achieved, what it is planning and where it has fallen short in implementing its mandate.

3. The work of the Commission in 2020 was based on its Operational Plan for the year, developed with specific activities to be implemented within the set timeline. The COVID-19 epidemic restrictions inhibited the full implementation of the Plan and even led to the suspension of certain activities such as visits to scenes of human rights violations, prisons and jails, human rights lectures tours and planned workshops. However, the Commission made every effort to carry out as many activities as possible. The following are the areas covered by these activities.

- a) To amend the MNHRC Law of 2014, the Commission was able to finalize the amendments called for by the international community, through consultations with the Supreme Court, the Office of the Attorney-General, the Ministry of Home Affairs and CSOs. These amendments have been submitted to the President's Office.
- b) To fulfil its mandate to protect human rights, the Commission made 42 visits to prisons, jails and detention centres in early 2020 before the COVID-19 epidemic worsened, including the youth training camps at Thanlyin and Nget Aw San in Yangon. Findings of the visits and the Commission's recommendations were communicated to the Government entities concerned and, many have been implemented by relevant authorities. In this regard, the Commission is encouraged by the cooperation of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- c) In spite of the COVID -19 epidemic, the Commission has received complaints without interruption, totaling 2,102. They were examined in daily screening meetings and referred to relevant authorities for verification and necessary action. In respect of serious violations, seven

visits were made to the sites of violations to verify the situation and then reported to the Office of the President. The Commission wishes to express its appreciation to the regional governments of Yangon Region, Mandalay Region and Ayeyarwaddy Region for their responsible responses to the complaints referred to them and hopes to receive continued cooperation from them.

- d) To enhance access to the Commission regarding human rights violations, the Commission broadcasts the information on how to lodge complaints with the Commission in twelve ethnic languages, using public radio and television channels.
- e) Pursuant to the Operational Plan for 2020, the Commission observed the Multiparty Democracy General Election held on 8 November 2020. It observed 20 polling stations in the seven selected constituencies of Yangon Region and Nay Pyi Taw and reported its observations to the Office of the President and Union Election Commission.
- f) Under the Paris Principles, the MNHRC, like other National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), is required to promote human rights through education, outreach programmes, the media, publications, training and advising. Accordingly, before the onset of COVID-19 the Commission had given lectures at training courses of the Government for officials of the military, police, civil service and fire brigades. The outreach programmes on human rights are being planned, targeting the wider community. The possibility of on-line trainings on human rights for government officials of States, Regions and Townships are also being explored with the UNDP.
- g) Since its reconstitution, the Commission has issued 15 public statements to bring to the attention of the Government and the public certain serious human rights situations. These statements concerned unregulated mining practices giving rise to loss of many lives, cyber bullying of the rights of women, fulfilling the special needs of the vulnerable groups in anti-COVID efforts. Playing its advisory role under the Paris Principles, the Commission has recommended the Government to ratify or at least sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and already embarked on advocacy steps for United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT), the two conventions extremely important for a democratic nation. The Commission has now presented its recommendations to the concerned authorities to become a state party to the ICCPR.
- h) To strengthen its relations with civil society, on-line discussions were held on Business and Human Rights, Land Law reform, regulation of private security services, question on digital rights and election monitoring. With

their cooperation, talks on Persons with Disability (PWD) and LGBT rights were held. Also workshops on child rights, PWD, women and girls' rights were conducted at the Commission. The CSOs engaged by the Commission in these activities were MCRB, Equality Myanmar, NCRWG, Shwemintha Foundation, Democracy Reporting International (DRI), Pen Myanmar, Triangle Women Organization, LGBT rights Network etc. Training of trainers programmes have been planned to be conducted with Equality Myanmar. The Commission met in Nay Pyi Taw with the Fundamental Rights of the Citizens, Democracy and Human Rights Committee of Amyotha Hluttaw and exchanged views on possible areas of cooperation between the two bodies.

- i) To engage with international human rights mechanisms, the Commission played the advisory role in the preparation of the Government UPR Report while it submitted its own report. Two technical working group meetings of the South East Asia National Human rights Institutions Forum (SEANF), its 17th Annual Conference, a High -Level Dialogue with the Asia Pacific Forum, and the Annual Meeting of the APF were held through video conferencing. The UNDP has assisted the Commission in upgrading its IT infrastructure and training of the Commission's staff in IT skills in a timely manner to enable the Commission to effectively participate in all these meetings.
- j) The Commission is currently planning together with the UNDP to conduct a business and human rights session on 15 December with the participation of B&HR experts and representatives of the private sector of Myanmar. The Commission also participated in the on-line GANHRI Annual Assembly of NHRIs from 3 to 4 December 2020.
- k) Having reviewed the implementation of its Operational Plan for 2020, the Commission has embarked on the development of new activities for the 2021 Operational Plan. The suspended activities of last year's plan will be integrated together with the new activities in the new plan.
- l) The Commission's capacity has now been obviously enhanced through various trainings conducted through cooperation with the UNDP and CSOs. In addition to the branches in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay and Sittwe, the Commission is planning to open three more branches, starting with the first one in Ayeyarwaddy Region and the remaining two in Shan and Kayah States afterwards.

4. Even amidst COVID-19 restrictions, the Commission had endeavoured to fulfil its mandate under the MNHRC Law in accordance with the Paris Principles to the best of its ability. On this International Human Rights Day, the Commission solemnly pledges

never to relent in its efforts to stand up for human rights and fundamental freedoms and contribute to rebuilding the Myanmar society highly impacted by the pandemic.

Myanmar National Human Rights Commission

Date: 10 December 2020