



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

9595th meeting

Thursday, 4 April 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mrs. Frazier/Mr. Camilleri (Malta)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Koudri
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Sierra Leone	Mr. Sowa
Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in Myanmar

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Myanmar

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; and Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director, Financing and Partnerships Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Khiari.

Mr. Khiari: More than three years have passed since the military overturned the democratically elected Government and detained its leaders, including President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. The Secretary-General has consistently called for their immediate release and that of all arbitrarily detained prisoners. He has also called for a unified response as violence continues to intensify throughout Myanmar, driving displacement and deepening the political, humanitarian and human rights crisis.

The expansion of armed conflict throughout the country has deprived communities of basic needs and access to essential services and has had a devastating impact on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Amid reports of indiscriminate aerial bombardments by the Myanmar armed forces and artillery shelling by various parties, the civilian toll keeps rising.

The United Nations condemns all forms of violence. As my colleague from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will highlight, ensuring the protection of civilians, including aid workers, in accordance with international humanitarian law, and securing the cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access are paramount.

In Rakhine state, fighting between the military and the Arakan Army has reached an unprecedented level of violence, compounding pre-existing vulnerabilities in Myanmar's poorest region. The Arakan Army has reportedly gained territorial control over most of central Rakhine and seeks to expand to northern Rakhine, where many Rohingya remain.

Broadly, ethnic armed organizations, the National Unity Government, the National Unity Consultative Council, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and others are working to overcome past divides beyond ethnic autonomy interests. Today the National Unity Consultative Council, which comprises various Myanmar stakeholders, convened its second People's Assembly to further define their common vision for the future of Myanmar.

Addressing the root causes of the Rohingya crisis will be essential to establish a sustainable pathway out of the current crisis. The failure to do so and continued impunity will only keep fuelling Myanmar's vicious cycle of violence. It is important that all parties in Rakhine protect the Rohingya population. Caught up in the middle of the conflict, civilians, including the Rohingya, face grave protection concerns and heightened intercommunal tensions. In particular, Rohingya communities continue to experience significant restrictions on their freedom of movement and denial of citizenship, and they remain disproportionately vulnerable to abduction or forced recruitment. There are also growing concerns for displaced Rohingya women and girls, who are facing increased risks of sexual violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking.

On 18 March, the Secretary-General highlighted his concern about reports of forcible detention and recruitment of youths, including Rohingya, and the potential impact of forced conscription on human rights and on the social fabric of communities in Myanmar. He also called on all parties to prevent further incitement of communal tensions.

Rakhine's current circumstances do not allow immediate prospects for the safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable repatriation of the Rohingya to their places of origin or choice. I reiterate the Secretary-General's call to redouble our efforts to enable access to territories for those fleeing persecution and violence and to protect and assist refugees from Myanmar, including the Rohingya, and support their host communities.

Effective regional protection mechanisms and early efforts to counter misinformation, disinformation and hate speech are needed.

The surge in the number of desperate Rohingya refugees reportedly dying or going missing while taking risky boat journeys in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal is alarming and underscores the need to find more suitable solutions for the Rohingya as soon as possible.

I take this opportunity to express appreciation for Bangladesh for generously hosting more than 1 million Rohingya refugees, most of whom fled Myanmar almost seven years ago. Collective support from the international community for the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis is critical. It is essential that protection measures be accompanied by efforts to address underlying causes of displacement and instability. Those efforts must be informed directly by the voices of the Rohingya.

Any solution to the current crisis requires conditions that permit the people of Myanmar to exercise their human rights freely and peacefully. An end to the military's campaign of violence and political repression is a vital step. In that respect, the Secretary-General has highlighted concern about the military's intention to move ahead with elections amid intensifying conflict and human rights violations across the country.

In that connection, the State Administration Council's announcement on the enforcement of the conscription law has intensified social unrest against the military and violence, including reports of attacks against village administrators, suicides of drafted young men and a surging number of movements across Myanmar's borders. The absence of youth in the workforce is further adding to Myanmar's dire socioeconomic outlook.

Myanmar's crisis continues to spill over, as conflicts in key border areas have weakened transnational security and the breakdown in the rule of law has allowed illicit economies to thrive. There is cause for concern beyond the region. Myanmar has become a global epicentre of methamphetamine and opium production, along with a rapid expansion of global cybercrime operations, particularly in border areas. With scarce livelihood opportunities, criminal networks continue to prey on the increasingly vulnerable population. What began as a regional crime threat in Southeast Asia is now a

rampant human trafficking and illicit trade crisis with global implications.

There is a clear case for greater international unity and support for the region. As called for by the Council, the United Nations will continue to work in complement to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and support its efforts to implement the five-point consensus on Myanmar and actively engage with all relevant stakeholders. The Secretary-General plans to appoint a Special Envoy in the coming days to engage with ASEAN, Member States and all stakeholders in order to advance towards a Myanmar-led political solution to the crisis.

As the prolonged crisis deepens, the Secretary-General continues to call for a unified international response and encourages Member States, particularly neighbouring countries, to leverage their influence in order to open up humanitarian channels, in line with international principles, end the violence and seek a comprehensive political solution that leads to an inclusive and peaceful future for Myanmar. The Security Council's role and implementation of resolution 2669 (2022) of December 2022, remains crucial.

The United Nations remains committed to staying and delivering, in solidarity with the people of Myanmar.

The President: I thank Mr. Khiari for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Doughten.

Ms. Doughten: I am grateful for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.

As members just heard from Assistant Secretary-General Khiari, the ongoing escalation of the conflict in Myanmar — including the worst levels of violence since 2021 — is severely affecting people in nearly every corner of the country and having alarming spillover effects into neighbouring countries.

The humanitarian impacts are significant and deeply concerning. People across Myanmar are living in daily fear for their lives, especially since the recent implementation of the national conscription law, while their ability to access essential goods and services and to cope with the crisis is stretched to its limits. In all, 2.8 million people have now been displaced, 90 per cent of them since the military takeover. Many of those people require urgent access to food, shelter and safety. As the number of people fleeing increases, it will be

critical to sustain international and regional attention on the crisis, including on strengthening the protection of refugees in the region.

Across Myanmar, hunger is mounting. In 2024, food insecurity is now affecting some 12.9 million people — nearly 25 per cent of the population. There is an increasing risk of malnutrition, particularly among children and pregnant women. Meanwhile basic medicines are running out, and the health system is in turmoil. It is estimated that 12 million people in Myanmar will need emergency health assistance this year alone. Urgent support is needed, particularly for vulnerable people with specific medical needs, including for HIV and tuberculosis. And disruption to health care means that routine immunizations have now been interrupted for consecutive years.

Children are bearing the brunt of this crisis, with likely permanent impacts on their lives. Severe interruption to education has affected almost 12 million learners over the past three years, and around one third of school-aged children are not currently enrolled in any form of education. That will have severe consequences for their development, mental health and future prospects.

On this International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, it pains us to note that children in Myanmar are among the most vulnerable to the dangers of mine contamination, a threat that continues to proliferate and has reached alarming levels over the past year. In 2023, there was a staggering 270 per cent surge in casualties resulting from landmines and explosive remnants of war, compared to 2022, with more than 1,000 casualties reported nationwide.

The crisis is disproportionately impacting women and girl, almost 9.7 million of whom are in need of humanitarian assistance, with the escalating violence increasing their vulnerability and exposure to trafficking and gender-based violence.

Since November 2023, renewed conflict in Rakhine state, including shelling in urban areas, has been severely affecting the lives of people in all its communities. The stateless Rohingya population is particularly vulnerable and is increasingly caught between two fighting parties. The rise of intercommunal tensions is also of great concern, reminding us of the devastating consequences from the 2012 and 2017 crises.

Roads and waterways have been closed for months, affecting humanitarian access. That has created food and water shortages and increased the prices of essential goods, compounding the struggles of communities still reeling from the impacts of Cyclone Mocha last May. And Internet and telecommunications services have been disrupted since November 2023. That is severely affecting people's access to vital information and the ability of humanitarian organizations to mount operations and communicate with affected people on the ground.

Across Myanmar, the humanitarian community estimates that some 18.6 million people will need humanitarian assistance in 2024 — a 19-fold increase since February 2022. The United Nations and its humanitarian partners remain determined to stay and deliver for as many of those people as possible and to provide protection through its presence. But to do so, we require the urgent support of the international community to address factors that are severely limiting our ability to operate.

First, we urgently need more funding for the humanitarian response. Successive years of gross underfunding are contributing to the scale and severity of humanitarian needs in Myanmar. The 2023 humanitarian response for Myanmar was funded at only 44 per cent of the \$887 million required, forcing partners to make tough decisions about who can receive that assistance.

Despite the constraints, humanitarian organizations delivered assistance to 3.2 million people across Myanmar — around 65 per cent of the people whom we aimed to reach under the humanitarian response plan. But the lack of funding still meant that more than 1.1 million people were left without priority life-saving assistance, almost three quarters of all planned shelter repair and construction was not possible and almost 672,000 people did not have access to safe drinking water.

To bolster the response in 2023, the Emergency Relief Coordinator released \$26 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund. That was a lifeline following Cyclone Mocha. But when humanitarian needs surged following the escalation of fighting in October 2023, we were forced to draw from stocks and essential supplies reserved for the first quarter of this year.

Today we continue to play catch-up, as escalating needs are not met with adequate funding. A quarter of

the way into the year, the 2024 humanitarian needs and response plan for Myanmar is funded only at a meagre 4 per cent. And as the cyclone season approaches, we urgently need additional funding in order to replenish stocks and ensure humanitarian assistance can continue.

Secondly, we must have safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to people in need, wherever they are. We continue to engage with all relevant parties to secure humanitarian access and to urge all sides not to politicize the delivery of aid. We call on the Security Council to continue impressing on the parties the imperative for humanitarians to be able to reach all people in need in Myanmar.

Thirdly, we cannot deliver assistance if aid workers are not safe. Intensified armed conflict, administrative restrictions and violence against aid workers all remain key barriers that are limiting humanitarian assistance from reaching vulnerable people.

From January 2022 to February 2024, more than 155 aid workers have been arrested or detained by various parties. We continue to demand that all relevant parties facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance and protect humanitarian workers, in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law, norms and standards. We call on the Security Council to support us in that demand.

As the conflict continues to escalate, as the humanitarian needs intensify and with the monsoon season just around the corner, time is of the essence for the people of Myanmar. They cannot afford for us to forget. They cannot afford to wait. They need the support of the international community now to help them survive in this time of fear and turmoil.

I urge the Security Council, Member States and the wider international community to do everything they can to ensure continued humanitarian support to the people of Myanmar. And I echo the Secretary-General's call for sustained international and regional attention to the crisis in Myanmar and for a cessation of hostilities by all parties.

Ultimately, only an end to the conflict will pave the way for an end to the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.

The President: I thank Ms. Doughten for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Doughten for their insightful briefings.

As we heard, it has now been over three years since the Myanmar military overturned the democratically elected Government, setting the country on a path of violence and humanitarian suffering.

The Myanmar armed forces have conducted air strikes across Myanmar, including in Rakhine state where communities are facing the dire impact of the escalating conflict. We unequivocally condemn such attacks. There is no justification for killing civilians.

We are following with deep concern credible reports of forcible detention and recruitment of the Rohingya, as a result of the military's conscription announcement. That has the potential to further stoke high intercommunal tensions between the Rohingya and Rakhine communities.

The situation in Rakhine state and in Myanmar more widely is devastating for its civilian population, and the international community must take action.

First, we must galvanize the political process. Over a year since the adoption of resolution 2669 (2022), the Myanmar military refuses to engage meaningfully with international efforts to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis. The Council has been clear in its unequivocal support for the five-point consensus of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the need to end all violence immediately. We therefore need to send a unified message in support of the implementation of resolution 2669 (2022), holding the military to account for their actions and showing solidarity with the people of Myanmar.

Secondly, we must address the humanitarian situation. The military's efforts to restrict access for humanitarian aid is worsening the harrowing situation on the ground. And the military's reported forced closure of hospitals in Rakhine state is preventing access to essential health care. We reiterate the Council's call for full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

Since 2017, the United Kingdom has provided over \$56 million dollars in aid, including cash assistance, water, sanitation and hygiene services for Rohingya and other Muslim minorities in Rakhine state. We remain clear that conditions are not conducive for any repatriation of the Rohingya. And we commend Bangladesh for hosting so many Rohingya refugees.

We will not allow Myanmar to become a forgotten crisis. We reiterate our call for renewed efforts to build towards a peaceful, inclusive Myanmar and a better future for the people of Myanmar. The appointment of a United Nations Special Envoy without further delay will help drive forward those efforts.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Khiari, and the Director from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Doughten, for their informative briefings.

Japan has consistently urged the Myanmar military to take three concrete actions: first, immediately stop the violence, including air strikes; secondly, release those who are detained, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other National League for Democracy leaders; and thirdly, swiftly restore Myanmar's democratic political system. Regrettably, those actions have not been taken.

Japan reiterates its strong condemnation of the Myanmar military's repeated extensions of the state of emergency without working towards a peaceful resolution, while countless innocent civilians, including women and children, have fallen victim to air strikes and other forms of violence. In addition, the introduction of conscription was announced by the Myanmar military in February. Japan is seriously concerned that it will throw the situation into further confusion.

As expressed by the Secretary-General, we are also alarmed by reports of ongoing air strikes by the military, including the recent one in Minbya township, Rakhine state, which reportedly killed and injured many civilians, including children. It is highly regrettable that the Council was not able to express its position on such an inhuman act against the people of Myanmar. We must recall that the Council has not been able to issue any press statement or any other Council products on the deteriorating situation in Myanmar for more than 15 months. That is definitely not something the people of Myanmar expect from this organ. The continuing silence of the Council would further accelerate the violations in Myanmar. We must represent the voice of the people of Myanmar who have strong aspirations for a peaceful and democratic future.

The Council should reiterate its support for the centrality of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Japan encourages ASEAN's Chair and its Special Envoy to engage with all relevant stakeholders in Myanmar, neighbouring countries and key regional

partners. There is also a need for ASEAN to maintain close coordination with relevant United Nations bodies and the next Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, who, we sincerely hope, will be appointed without further delay.

Human rights should be protected and the humanitarian situation in Myanmar needs to be improved in a manner that reflects the will of the people of Myanmar. Japan has continuously provided humanitarian assistance for the people of Myanmar. Last month, the Government of Japan decided to provide additional humanitarian assistance totalling approximately \$37 million. The assistance will include medical services, nutrition improvement for pregnant women and infants, water and sanitation infrastructure, access to education, food and medicine distribution, and support for women victims of trafficking in persons. In order to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those in need, Japan will continue to actively provide such assistance in even closer coordination not only with international organizations but also with non-governmental organizations and other partners. The Council must be united in calling on the military to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

Japan believes that further and more frequent discussions on this agenda item in the Council would be instrumental for taking more coordinated actions towards a peaceful resolution of the situation in Myanmar. Japan is ready for further discussions about any possible action by the Council to support the people of Myanmar.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We listened carefully to the briefing by Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari, and we took note of the remarks by the Director from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Lisa Doughten.

We regret that today, owing to the open format of this meeting, pushed through by the informal penholders on this dossier, we will not be able to have a calm and non-politicized discussion aimed at finding solutions to the problems under consideration. Obviously, there are things that cannot be discussed when engaging in megaphone diplomacy, and we have every reason to believe that the departure from the established practice of holding private meetings of the Security Council on Myanmar, at the insistence of Western delegations, will not be conducive to a productive discussion.

In order to identify solutions to the problems that Myanmar faces today, it is necessary to discover their root causes. As with many other States, they lie in a past marred by Western colonial policies. In the several decades of its rule over Myanmar, Britain completely reshaped the status quo that had prevailed for centuries. Playing on the differences between the country's different peoples and ethnic groups, London pitted them against each other to such an extent that the reverberations can be seen until this day, including in Rakhine state.

Myanmar is an example of London's favourite policy of divide-and-conquer. There are numerous other examples in the history of South-East Asia alone. In addition to Myanmar, hundreds of millions of people living in modern China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam and Sri Lanka were the victims of British invasions and merciless exploitation of human resources. The indigenous population of Australia was on the verge of extermination.

It was Great Britain that brought destruction and mass death to the region, while acquiring untold riches for its elite. One only has to take a look at the old mansions of central London and visit the city's main museums to realize that the scale of the plundering was beyond imagination. The true attitude of Western elites to the people of South and South-East Asia is evidenced by the words of Prime Minister Churchill when famine broke out in India in 1943 owing to the predatory policies of the British crown. At the time, the British leader refused to help, saying only that the famine was the Indians' "own fault for breeding like rabbits".

Against that backdrop, London's "phantom pain" over the irrevocably lost colonial past and its desire to grasp any opportunity to curb in any way the emergence of a new centre of power in South-East Asia are obvious. The methods of the United Kingdom's policy of greed have changed but the essence remains the same. Because of its inability to influence Myanmar's Government with guns and rifles — as it did during the three Anglo-Burmese wars in the nineteenth century — Britain has taken to illegitimate restrictive measures. The United Kingdom is trying to use international organizations, including the United Nations and its Security Council, to exert political pressure. That is the real reason for convening today's meeting, and let no one be misled by the cunning rhetoric of our British colleagues about their concern for the fate of the people of Myanmar.

Speaking of the current situation in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, our long-standing friend and close partner, we should like to emphasize that neither the adoption of resolution 2669 (2022) nor some aggravation of the situation over the past five months are factors that require the convening of an open meeting of the Security Council. The situation in Myanmar is not a threat to international peace and security. We oppose the use of the Security Council to put pressure on Naypyidaw and condemn attempts by Western delegations to politicize the Myanmar file, including through human rights issues. If they are interested in those aspects, it would be more appropriate to consider the matter in specialized forums, such as the Third Committee of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

Whatever Western delegations may claim in that context, we note the efforts of the authorities of Myanmar to normalize the situation, preserve national unity and ensure the country's sovereignty. Putting pressure on Myanmar, including through unsubstantiated accusations based on information from unreliable sources, which we heard and will hear again today, can only exacerbate the situation and lead to greater division in the country. In fact, that is what our Western colleagues are seeking, and we have no illusions in that regard.

We advocate a depoliticized and non-confrontational approach to the discussion of solutions to the problem of displaced persons from Myanmar's Rakhine state. The key factor in that regard is the promotion of direct dialogue and practical engagement between Naypyidaw and Dhaka, building on existing bilateral agreements. We commend the Government of Bangladesh, which has hosted refugees on its territory for humanitarian reasons, despite the difficult financial, social and environmental challenges. Russia contributes to assisting the Rohingyas via the World Food Programme. We welcome the work of the Myanmar-Bangladesh Joint Working Group on Repatriation, as well as its technical working group. We believe that the task of the international community is to assist Myanmar and Bangladesh in implementing the relevant agreements and Rakhine development programmes, while respecting the sovereignty of both countries and not interfering in their internal affairs.

We attach great importance to deepening interaction between Naypyidaw and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). We note in particular the steps taken by ASEAN Special Envoy for

Myanmar Alounkeo Kittikhoun towards establishing an intra-Myanmar dialogue, implementing the five-point consensus and providing humanitarian assistance to the country.

We believe that the work of the trilateral consultative mechanism, involving the foreign ministers of Bangladesh, Myanmar and China within the framework of the joint working group established in 2019, is highly promising. We support efforts to develop cooperation between Myanmar and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme with a view to implementing the memorandum on facilitating the return and accommodation of returnees.

We share the concern of the authorities of Myanmar about the increased activity of extremist groups in the territory of Rakhine since the end of last year, particularly the so-called Arakan Army. There is ample evidence that that militia — and the armed opposition in general — is supported by Western countries and used as a lever to achieve their neo-colonial goals. At the same time, in their public statements, the United States, the United Kingdom and their allies call for increased pressure on the Myanmar leadership to expedite the return of refugees but conveniently leave out the fact that the actions of their protégés further destabilize the situation in Rakhine and worsen the situation in internally displaced person camps. In other words, the steps taken by Western countries, which are concerned only with promoting their own geopolitical interests in the region, make it impossible to fulfil the demands they make of the Myanmar authorities.

Meanwhile, the recipe for solving Myanmar's internal problems is obvious. It entails normalizing the situation under the state of emergency that has been in effect since February 2021, continuing the process of national reconciliation, which the armed groups are refusing to do at the instigation of the West, and implementing projects in the field of socioeconomic development in the territories inhabited by ethnic minorities in Rakhine and other parts of the country. There is no doubt that the issues of the civil and legal status of internally displaced persons must be resolved. However, the solution must be in line with Myanmar's legislative norms. We believe that it is unacceptable to exploit existing objective difficulties to exert pressure on Naypyidaw and attempt to shake up the internal situation in Myanmar. That is specifically the aim of the steps taken by certain countries to involve the

International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court in the consideration of the so-called Rakhine issue.

We embrace other approaches, giving pride of place to Myanmar's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence. For that reason, we are focused on constructive dialogue and meaningful cooperation with all stakeholders in order to develop, jointly with the Government of Myanmar, optimal ways to establish international assistance to resolve the situation in and around Rakhine state. We call on all objective parties that do not embrace the Western geopolitical agenda to join our efforts.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): My thanks go to Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Director Doughten for their informative briefings.

The situation in Myanmar has continued to deteriorate since the coup in 2021, including the recent expansion of conflicts in Rakhine state. Caught up between the warring parties, a large civilian population is paying the heaviest toll. Violence against civilians and civilian infrastructure is rampant, often involving indiscriminate shelling and air strikes. Some 2.8 million people have been displaced to date. The recent nationwide conscription announcement raises further concern, in addition to the ongoing forced recruitment by multiple parties. Youth are left with the options of either fleeing or taking part in violence. At the same time, Myanmar has become a haven for transnational organized crime, including human trafficking, and the world's largest opium producer.

The implications for neighbouring countries and the wider region are significant. Yet, regrettably, there has been no United Nations Special Envoy, no United Nations Resident Coordinator and no regular meetings or reporting mechanism of the Security Council. The Security Council should start making use of its tools. In that regard, the Republic of Korea welcomes this very first and long-overdue open briefing in the Security Council on Myanmar, more than three years after Myanmar was plunged into conflict, chaos and misery. We hope today's Security Council public discussion rekindles international attention to the harrowing situation in Myanmar and brings about active engagement by the United Nations.

Against that backdrop, I would like to underline three points today: first, strengthened coordination on

the humanitarian front; secondly, the role of the next United Nations Special Envoy; and thirdly, enhanced cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Security Council.

To begin with, humanitarian access in various parts of Myanmar continues to be a critical issue, amid a deepening humanitarian crisis. For instance, OCHA recently reported that major transport routes were blocked and that telecommunications were cut following the escalation of violence in Rakhine state. Full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access is urgently needed, as is strengthened coordination among humanitarian actors. Diverse aid providers, including United Nations agencies, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) and non-governmental organizations, could leverage their respective networks to reach those most in need, without discrimination. We remain keen to follow the developments of Thailand's cross-border humanitarian initiative, with the involvement of the AHA Centre, and we hope for the swift return of a United Nations Resident Coordinator to the country with a high-profile and stable humanitarian leadership.

In the meantime, outside Myanmar, nearly 4,500 Rohingya people have risked perilous boat journeys in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal. Of that number, 569 died or went missing in 2023 alone. Prospects for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees have worsened. We commend Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries for their ongoing efforts to accommodate Rohingya refugees. Korean officials visited Cox's Bazar twice over the past year and witnessed first-hand the risks and challenges faced by Rohingya refugees following the cutback in international assistance. The Republic of Korea has provided more than \$36 million in humanitarian aid to support the Rohingya people since 2017 and will continue to join collective efforts to provide protection and assistance to refugees and displaced persons.

Secondly, we need a United Nations Special Envoy. We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to appoint a Special Envoy in the coming days. The scale and complexity of the Myanmar crisis require more than domestic, bilateral or regional efforts. The United Nations should exert its own strengths to uphold the core principles of the Charter of the United Nations on the ground. In Rakhine state, unchecked violence is rampant. Civilians are being killed, abused and forcibly recruited by multiple parties. The Rohingya

are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, given the decades of systematic oppression. That is part of the larger picture of the ongoing expansion of conflicts across Myanmar.

While we fully appreciate the work of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar and the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, the United Nations needs a political messenger to continually engage with all parties. The Special Envoy could serve to sensitize the parties on international law and humanitarian principles as well as on how human rights can serve as a source of legitimacy — particularly in the eyes of civilians. Support for a political solution should also continue. We expect the next Special Envoy to actively complement the ASEAN Special Envoy's efforts to promote conditions for political dialogue. Those efforts should be geared towards expediting the political process for the realization of an inclusive and peaceful democracy in Myanmar.

Thirdly, the Security Council should translate its support for ASEAN-led efforts into actions. As ASEAN's close dialogue partner, the Republic of Korea respects ASEAN's central role on the Myanmar issue and sees merit in organizing and deepening cooperation between the Council and ASEAN under the framework of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. Under Article 54 of the Charter, the Security Council could envisage regular interactive dialogues with ASEAN in informal settings. That would enable the Council to directly hear about and accurately understand ASEAN's activities and concerns, which will provide useful guidance in determining the Council's next steps. Overall, the Security Council's dormancy on this file should not be a sign of its respect for ASEAN centrality.

The Republic of Korea has deepened cooperation with 10 ASEAN countries, including Myanmar, over the past decades, with an exponential increase in economic, development, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. We wish to continue developing our comprehensive partnership with ASEAN for peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

Before concluding, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its solidarity with the people of Myanmar, including the more than 25,000 people staying in Korea. As a country from the region, we will continue to assign

high priority to the situation in Myanmar during our Security Council term.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari and Ms. Lisa Doughten for their briefings. We welcome the holding of this meeting and the presence of the representatives of Malaysia, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Since the previous Council meeting (see S/PV.9541), the security situation in Myanmar has continued to deteriorate, and the humanitarian situation has worsened significantly. It is important not to forget Myanmar. It is impossible to forget the plight of the Rohingya.

We welcome the efforts of neighbouring countries, first and foremost Bangladesh, which has taken in almost 1 million refugees. To ensure that their return is voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable, we need to tackle the root causes of the crisis in Myanmar and in Rakhine state in particular.

Allow me to make three points in that regard.

First, we condemn the escalation of armed conflict, which has intensified since the military coup. The increase in indiscriminate bombing in recent months is having a devastating impact on the civilian population. We are alarmed by the air strikes carried out by the military, in particular those on 18 March in Minbya township, which reportedly killed and injured many civilians. That is just one example, a particularly deadly one, but not an isolated one, as the Independent Investigation Mechanism for Myanmar reports, indicating that possible war crimes and crimes against humanity might have been committed. In that context, we note the role of the International Criminal Court and our support for the Mechanism. All parties to the conflict must respect international humanitarian law and their human rights obligations at all times, pursuant to resolution 2669 (2022). The upsurge in violence makes it even more difficult to return to the negotiating table and find a political solution to the conflict. In Rakhine state, in particular, the conflict is exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities and discrimination while increasing intercommunal tensions.

Secondly, restrictions on humanitarian access that prevent aid from reaching vulnerable communities must end. All parties have an obligation to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to civilians in need. Humanitarian access must be full,

safe and unhindered, and the protection, safety and security of humanitarian and medical personnel must be fully ensured. In that regard, we also encourage the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to fully implement the five-point consensus.

Yesterday's thematic meeting on children and armed conflict (see S/PV.9594) focused on the consequences for children of being denied access to humanitarian aid. The fact that the military is reportedly stepping up its use of forced recruitment, notably in Rakhine state, including of Rohingya, is of particular concern to us. Many young people are reportedly being conscripted against their will. We reiterate that children must not be recruited into armed forces or armed groups. Such practices constitute serious violations against children in armed conflicts. We are also concerned about the gendered impact of forced conscription. That includes the risk of sexual and gender-based violence, long perpetrated by the military.

Thirdly, close coordination between the United Nations and regional actors, primarily ASEAN, is essential, including for mediation and inclusive dialogue efforts, as well as for the delivery of humanitarian aid. Addressing the needs on the ground requires determined and visible leadership from the United Nations in order to coordinate, on the basis of a nexus approach, humanitarian, diplomatic and development action in one of the most serious conflicts in the world.

To that end, it is imperative to rapidly appoint a Special Envoy so as to ensure effective coordination and cooperation with ASEAN. The same applies to the position of United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, without which United Nations support risks losing effectiveness and credibility.

The Security Council must play a more active role in this matter. Switzerland stands ready to support united and decisive action through the development of a new Security Council instrument. Resolution 2669 (2022) must be followed up.

Mr. Koudri (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, and Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their valuable briefings.

Algeria expresses its deep concern about the continuing tragic situation in Myanmar, which is having

a significant impact on civilians throughout the country, particularly in Rakhine state. That situation has led to a high rate of internal displacement, an increase in the flow of refugees to the region and the exacerbation of the humanitarian situation of the Rohingya.

In that context, Algeria believes that reaching peaceful and comprehensive solutions to the challenges facing Myanmar is critical. While emphasizing the importance of the principles of non-interference and respect for national sovereignty, Algeria also believes that dialogue is essential among all parties concerned, and that they must show maximum restraint through the immediate cessation of all acts of violence so as to ensure the safety of civilians.

Adherence to international humanitarian law and international human rights law is vital and requires that all necessary measures must be taken in order to ensure the protection and safety of the entire population, including vulnerable groups, in particular the Rohingya.

In that regard, Algeria stresses the importance of a sustainable effective humanitarian response in order to alleviate the plight of the Rohingya people who are still suffering from the crisis in Myanmar, and urges the international community to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to every displaced person and refugee and to ensure unhindered humanitarian access.

Algeria calls on all actors to the conflict to prioritize a decent life for all people in Myanmar, regardless of their race or religion, and to make efforts to address the root causes of the current situation. We urge the authorities in Myanmar to stop the suffering of refugees and to facilitate their voluntary return to their homes in a peaceful and dignified manner.

Finally, Algeria stresses the importance of regional initiatives and fully supports the efforts undertaken by ASEAN to promote dialogue, reconciliation, peace and stability in Myanmar.

Mr. Sowa (Sierra Leone): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. Let me also thank the briefers — Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Director Lisa Doughten — for the information provided. I also welcome the representatives of Malaysia, Indonesia and Bangladesh to this briefing.

This meeting on Myanmar is appropriate considering the deteriorating political and security situation in the country, which represents a grave challenge to the region's peace and stability. Three

years since the military coup, the civilian population has borne the brunt of the violence. Reports of violence against minority groups, especially the Rohingya and in Rakhine state, as well as human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence, are especially troubling.

We note with alarm reports of attacks against civilian infrastructure, especially in Rakhine state, including health, educational, energy and business facilities, which continue to impede the provision of essential public, private and humanitarian services, thus exacerbating high levels of disease and food insecurity in the country.

According to reports by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNICEF, more than 2 million people are internally displaced and living in precarious conditions, and more than 18 million people, including 6 million children, are in need of humanitarian and protection support. There is an impetus for the Security Council to accelerate measures for political resolution and peace in Myanmar.

With that in mind, my delegation would like to underscore three points.

First, Sierra Leone condemns all forms of violence against civilians and calls for the protection of civilians. According to reports, recent efforts to hold major urban centres and control infantry battalions have resulted in artillery shelling that has indiscriminately killed and injured many civilians. Parties to the conflict must not utilize explosive weapons in densely populated neighbourhoods, including marketplaces and places of worship. The reliance on artillery and close air support should not be a fallback strategy for losing capacity for offensive ground operations. Echoing the Secretary-General's concerns, the expansion of conflict in Rakhine state only exacerbates pre-existing vulnerabilities and discrimination, and that is a driver for further displacement of civilians.

Secondly, the troika mechanism established by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) should be fully utilized. In the context of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council must fully support the implementation of the five-point consensus agreed by ASEAN in 2021, in its objective of "restoring peace, stability and a Myanmar-owned and -led comprehensive political resolution". The Council must ensure that all parties are committed to the five-point consensus as a main reference point.

The cessation of hostilities across Myanmar is a key enabler to a peaceful and democratic process. We note engagements earlier this year by His Excellency Alounkeo Kittikhoun, Special Envoy on Myanmar appointed by the Chair of ASEAN, with the leadership of Myanmar's military and State Administration Council, some leaders of the ethnic armed groups that were adhering to the informal year-long ceasefire agreement, as well as other ethnic armed groups in Bangkok, Thailand. We regard those engagements as important, in line with the resolution 2669 (2022), commitments to supporting constructive dialogue and reconciliation and upholding democratic institutions and processes.

Thirdly, the parties must ensure the unhindered, unrestricted and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance and aid for the more than the 18 million people in need of humanitarian support. We consider it reprehensible that aid workers, especially in Rakhine state, are subjected to attacks and violence. That disrupts humanitarian operations and, ultimately, has a devastating impact on the survival of civilians.

In that regard, we call for the intensification of efforts for ensuring unhindered humanitarian access and delivery to civilians in Myanmar, as well as the strengthening of collaborative mechanisms among aid organizations, including those linked to ASEAN and the United Nations. We also call for increased funding support to ensure that life-saving aid reaches the approximately 5.3 million people who need urgent assistance.

In conclusion, we call for the unity of Council members in addressing the urgent need for a peaceful resolution in Myanmar, in line with resolution 2669 (2022), which supports the centrality of ASEAN's five-point consensus, as well as the need for effective collaboration, monitoring and reporting mechanisms in political and humanitarian actions.

Sierra Leone remains committed to supporting efforts to bring the conflict to an end.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Doughten for their informative briefings.

Guyana remains gravely concerned about the situation in Myanmar, including the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation. We note from the latest reports of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(OCHA) that the crisis in Myanmar is now marked by surging displacement, a fragile security environment and escalating unmet needs, with 18.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2024. The food insecurity situation is dire, with 12.9 million people affected and children and pregnant women most vulnerable to malnutrition. We are also concerned about the deteriorating situation in Rakhine state, especially following the attacks of 29 February.

We commend the recent announcement by Myanmar and Thailand of a pilot initiative to scale up humanitarian assistance to people living in Kayin state and hope that this positive example of regional cooperation will be further expanded, given the scale of unmet needs across the country.

Compounding the challenges are the restrictions placed on humanitarian access. While we acknowledge Myanmar's announcement that humanitarian access has been granted to United Nations agencies and international humanitarian organizations operating in Rakhine state, we note that aid agencies continue to face restrictions in accessing conflict areas. As Director Doughten reported, OCHA continues to face heavy access constraints and bureaucratic impediments, with 185 aid workers arrested and detained.

Guyana commends the dedication of humanitarian workers in Myanmar and demands that they be granted rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to all affected areas, including Rakhine state. Supply routes connecting Rakhine to other parts of Myanmar must also be re-opened fully to minimize the impact of food shortages and price hikes in the affected areas. We also urge that humanitarian workers be provided with the resources needed and encourage Member States to scale up support to the 2024 humanitarian needs and response plan.

Guyana shares the view that no solution to the humanitarian crisis can be sustained until and unless there is a nationwide ceasefire in Myanmar and there is firm action to address the political and economic situation in the country. We have seen reports of continued attacks on civilians and instances of forcible detention and recruitment of youths. Reports from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights suggest that some Rohingya, including very young children, were killed or injured as a result of bombardment and ongoing air strikes by the military

in Rakhine state. Some were even kidnapped and forced to join the military ranks.

Guyana strongly condemns any attacks against civilians and the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups, all of which are clear violations of international law, including international humanitarian law. We demand an immediate end to those abhorrent and illegal acts.

We further call for the safe and dignified return of the Rohingya refugees and other internally displaced persons and urge all parties to the conflict in Myanmar to respect and fully comply with their obligations under international law.

In conclusion, Guyana calls for full compliance with resolution 2669 (2022) and for the rapid implementation of the five-point consensus of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We also look forward to the appointment of the United Nations Special Envoy in the coming days.

We will continue to work with fellow Council members in supporting efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement in Myanmar.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Khaled Khiari and Lisa Doughten for their briefings.

France is deeply concerned by the ongoing violence and atrocities committed by the junta in Burma against the population. The regime that arose from the coup d'état continues to massacre civilians. The junta's indiscriminate violence is taking a heavy toll on the most vulnerable, including children, in defiance of international law. The junta continues to bomb villages, hospitals, refugee camps and schools, as it did on 5 February in Kayah state.

We are concerned about the fate of refugees and internally displaced persons, in particular from the Rohingya minority. The situation in Rakhine state today is particularly dire and threatens regional stability. The junta continues to obstruct the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance, which the people urgently need, as it does throughout the country, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. The junta continues to violate human rights, in particular the rights of women and girls, who continue to be subjected to violence, including sexual violence.

Given those circumstances, we remain mobilized and call for a more resolute commitment from the international community. France has continued to increase its humanitarian assistance to the Burmese people, which has risen to €6.5 million in 2023, more than double what it was in 2022. We call for full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to the entire territory and for all those in need.

France is maintaining its financial support for the Burmese people, in particular for the programmes of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Burma and Bangladesh. We also applaud the role played by Bangladesh, which has consistently demonstrated its solidarity by hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees on its territory. It is essential to create the conditions for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees.

We call for the full implementation of resolution 2669 (2022). We call for a cessation of violence and the release of all political prisoners, including State Councillor Aung San Suu Kyi and the President of the Republic, Win Myint.

Together with its European partners, France is continuing its policy of sanctions against the regime which arose from the coup d'état.

France supports the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, which is doing essential work in the fight against impunity, as well as the resolutions on human rights in Burma put forward by the European Union in the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. France welcomes the work of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, whose mandate has just been renewed.

Finally, France reiterates its complete support for Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) efforts to resolve the crisis, on the basis of the five-point consensus. The Security Council must be able to support those efforts if necessary. France recalls its commitment to working with all the ASEAN countries, as well as with all of Myanmar's neighbours, which have a central role to play, including in terms of humanitarian aid.

We call for the rapid appointment of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Myanmar and welcome this morning's announcement that the appointment is imminent.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): I thank the presidency for convening this meeting and the briefers for their insights. We also acknowledge the presence of the representatives of Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia at this meeting.

We remain deeply concerned by the worsening conflict and deteriorating situation in Myanmar, with no encouraging signs of progress towards resolution. The prevailing military approach has proven ineffective and unsustainable, leading to a vicious cycle of violence. The appalling acts against civilians, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, disappearances, sexual violence and attacks on children, continue unabated and with impunity. The protracted conflict produces destabilizing regional spillover effects and threatens international peace and security. The Council must keep its attention focused on that complex crisis.

The humanitarian emergency is among the most visible and distressing aspects, with millions in dire need and requiring protection. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, an alarming 18.6 million people, including 2.8 million internally displaced persons, require urgent humanitarian assistance in 2024 — a figure that is likely higher, due to access constraints. Tragically, only 3.2 million are currently receiving aid. That illustrates that the humanitarian emergency is among the most visible and distressing consequences, with millions in dire need of aid and protection.

While there are no humanitarian solutions to such conflict-driven crises, we appeal for additional funding for the 2024 humanitarian response plan, which is only 7 per cent funded, leaving gaping needs unmet. Further contributions are critical to alleviate immense civilian suffering.

In many conflicts, the civilian population, particularly women, girls and children, bear the brunt of the violence and atrocities, and Myanmar is not an exception. The protection of civilians is the cornerstone of international humanitarian law. That is not an option; rather, it is an imperative. In line with international humanitarian law, we underscore the imperative for all parties to uphold their obligations to protect civilians, with strict adherence to the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality. Civilians, especially women, girls and children, continue to pay the highest cost in the conflict.

Mozambique has consistently advocated for the peaceful resolution of disputes. In that regard, we highly encourage and support the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) ongoing facilitation efforts and the constructive roles played by regional stakeholders. We urge all parties in Myanmar to fully implement the ASEAN five-point consensus and comply with resolution 2669 (2022) as the solid basis for a sustainable political solution.

The United Nations also has an indispensable role to play. We look forward to the timely appointment of the new Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Myanmar to intensify facilitation efforts. Only through inclusive dialogue and a negotiated political settlement can the crisis be resolved and the untold suffering of the people of Myanmar be alleviated.

In conclusion, Mozambique reiterates its unwavering support for all efforts towards stability, reconciliation and sustainable peace in Myanmar.

Mrs. Blokari Drobic (Slovenia): I wish to join others in thanking Assistant Secretary-General Khiri and Director Doughten for their briefings.

Slovenia remains deeply concerned about the escalation of conflict in Myanmar, which has now expanded throughout the country. Three years of military rule have pushed Myanmar into deep crisis, threatening not only its own stability and multi-ethnic character but also the stability of the region. Increased fighting in Rakhine state in recent months, in particular the attacks by the military in March, is fuelling displacement and has led to a worsening of existing vulnerabilities and discrimination.

Slovenia renews its condemnation of the military coup and all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. We join the Secretary-General in his calls to protect civilians and to prevent the further incitement of communal tensions. We are deeply concerned about the increased use of air strikes by the military and about the influx of arms and equipment used to commit atrocities, which needs to be restricted.

Allow me to make the following remarks.

First, Slovenia welcomes the central role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in facilitating a solution to the crisis and its efforts to implement the five-point consensus plan. The situation in Myanmar is worsening, and we encourage ASEAN to continue its efforts towards the restoration of peace,

democracy and civilian rule in the country. We strongly believe that, while ensuring close coordination with ASEAN, the ongoing situation in Myanmar merits regular discussions in the Security Council, and we regret that the Council was unable to agree on a press statement on the deteriorating situation and human suffering.

Secondly, we express profound concern about the continued worsening of the humanitarian situation in Myanmar, where women and girls are again among the most vulnerable population, at particular risk of sexual violence and human trafficking. We condemn all deliberate obstructions to humanitarian assistance, including the military-imposed restrictions on communications and movement, and the intimidation of humanitarian workers. Such actions flagrantly violate international humanitarian law and human rights law as well as humanitarian principles. We once again call on all parties to the conflict to fully respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. We applaud the local humanitarian workers who continue their efforts to provide assistance to those in need.

In addition, the humanitarian situation in Rakhine state is seriously deteriorating, including for the Rohingya. We stress that the current circumstances in Myanmar do not allow for a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes. That is prolonging the dire situation of Rohingya refugees in neighbouring countries, as well as that of internally displaced persons, returnees and stateless persons in Myanmar. We commend Bangladesh for continuing to host more than 1 million refugees from Myanmar.

Thirdly, we strongly condemn the military's indiscriminate violence against the people of Myanmar, which amounts to severe violations and abuses of international human rights law. We call on the military to stop the violence against its own population, to release all political prisoners and to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons in Myanmar. We call for justice and accountability for breaches of international humanitarian law and human rights violations. In that respect, we express our strong support for the work of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar and the investigations and proceedings conducted by national, regional or international tribunals, including the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

The military's recent announcement of a compulsory military service law is worrisome, as young women and men could be subjected to mandatory conscription without an appeal process. That may have serious consequences for the enjoyment of their human rights. We are particularly concerned about the reports of forced recruitment, abductions and other forms of abuse and violence, particularly in Rakhine state. We remain alarmed by the continued recruitment and use of children and other grave violations against children in armed conflict by various parties.

The people of Myanmar have been suffering for far too long, and their plea for peace must not be ignored. We call for the full implementation of resolution 2669 (2022) and for a path towards a democratic transition with a return to civilian rule, as well as respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. It is therefore crucial for the international community to redouble its efforts to achieve a unified approach in resolving this crisis; in that connection, we look forward to the prompt appointment of a Special Envoy for Myanmar. We need to work together with ASEAN and other stakeholders towards a cessation of violence and to pave the way for a stable, peaceful and democratic Myanmar.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I take note of the information presented by Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, and by Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of Financing at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. I also welcome the presence of the representatives of Malaysia, Indonesia and Bangladesh at this meeting.

My delegation expresses its support for, and solidarity with, the civilian population of Myanmar, who are facing the consequences of three years of violence and insecurity since the coup d'état perpetrated by the military junta in February 2021. Ecuador reiterates that the objective of achieving sustainable peace in Myanmar will be possible only with the effective implementation of resolution 2669 (2022), the re-establishment of the rule of law and the establishment of a transparent system of accountability that brings perpetrators of human rights violations before international tribunals, including the International Criminal Court. Therefore, we urge the military junta to cease attacks targeting the civilian population, release political prisoners, establish a definitive ceasefire and abide by the agreements reached in the five-point consensus.

Ecuador shares the Secretary-General's concern about the deterioration of the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation and the escalation of violence in Myanmar, and it calls for the root causes of the conflict to be addressed and for a return to the diplomatic path proposed by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and supported by the international community.

Over the past few months in the Council, we have expressed our rejection of all forms of the indiscriminate use of force, whose impact is borne disproportionately by women, children and members of ethnic and religious minorities. The escalation of the conflict throughout the territory, particularly in Rakhine state, has placed the civilian population in a situation of extreme vulnerability and has caused a massive exodus of people, fuelled by serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. As we heard at the briefing organized by Malta yesterday (see S/PV.9594), 6 million children have been denied access to health and education services as a result of the deliberate targeting of schools and hospitals, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

In acknowledgement of the growing number of victims of violence, of children and young people recruited by militias, of people killed, arbitrarily detained and tortured and of the increased use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, it is imperative that the Security Council continue to closely consider the situation in Myanmar. In that context, Ecuador believes that the safety and freedom of movement of United Nations and humanitarian agency officials must be safeguarded and that the bureaucratic obstacles and discriminatory practices that prevent them from providing life-saving assistance to the population groups in greatest need of it must be dismantled. In addition, refugee host countries must respect the principle of non-refoulement and work collaboratively with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration to come up with durable solutions that will restore the dignity and well-being of people on the move.

Finally, Ecuador reiterates its support for the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar and the United Nations teams on the ground and hopes that their joint efforts will be translated into concrete actions aimed at establishing a just, peaceful and democratic Myanmar.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Doughten for their briefings. I also wish to thank the United Kingdom for requesting this open meeting on the worsening crisis that the Myanmar military is imposing on the people of Myanmar. I also welcome the representatives of Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia to this meeting.

We condemn the military regime's ongoing atrocities and human rights abuses. We are horrified to hear continuing reports of village burnings, torture, beheadings and other brutal acts committed amid the conflict. The situation in Myanmar presents a growing threat to international security, particularly for those in the Indo-Pacific region. Myanmar has become the world's largest opium producer, a hub for transnational organized crime and a driver of several major refugee crises.

We will draw attention to three important issues today: the Myanmar military's devastating air strikes on civilians and civilian infrastructure, the multi-generational consequences of unexploded ordnance littering the country and the urgent need for full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

First, in the past five months, the Myanmar military's air strikes on civilians have increased fivefold. Between November 2023 and early March 2024, the military carried out 588 air strikes across Myanmar, 34 per cent of which have harmed civilians. That is in addition to the air strikes, shelling and arson by the regime that have destroyed homes, schools, health-care facilities and places of worship since the military illegally took power three years ago. Therefore, I want to remind my colleagues on the Council of the General Assembly's calls for measures to restrict the flow of arms and the repeated calls by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for greater United Nations support. We again call on the Council to take measures to restrict the military's access to jet fuel in order to impede its ability to carry out air strikes. It is time for the Council to take action.

Secondly, unexploded ordnance from years of conflict and the increasing use of landmines by all sides of Myanmar's conflict have led to the nation becoming one of the most explosives-contaminated countries in the world. An average of three people are killed or injured every day by landmines and unexploded ordnance in Myanmar, compounding an already

tragic situation. Just yesterday, UNICEF reported that the number of civilian casualties from landmines and explosive remnants of war more than doubled in the past year. Without a comprehensive approach and global action, the number of victims of those appalling circumstances will grow each year for decades to come. We urge all stakeholders in Myanmar to immediately allow demining and clearing of unexploded ordnance.

Finally, humanitarian assistance to the vulnerable people in Myanmar must increase. The United States has contributed nearly \$2.4 billion since 2017 in response to the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, Bangladesh and the region. We strongly appeal to other donors to increase support for those critical humanitarian response plans.

Funding is important, but it makes a difference only if humanitarians can access those in need. We therefore urge that humanitarian actors be granted unhindered access and that appropriate steps be taken to ensure the independence, safety and security of humanitarian and medical personnel. The United Nations has not had a permanent resident/humanitarian coordinator in Myanmar in more than three years, and it has now been 10 months since the last United Nations Special Envoy on Myanmar departed that role. Since then, the situation has only worsened. We look forward to the Secretary-General's appointment of a Special Envoy to Myanmar without further delay. With 2.8 million internally displaced persons and nearly 5,000 civilians killed, the situation requires senior United Nations leadership to alleviate the suffering and restore a path to inclusive democracy.

The Council to an important first step to improve the lives of those in Myanmar — the adoption of resolution 2669 (2022). However, the military has disregarded the resolution and ASEAN's five-point consensus, as it perpetuates further violence against the people in Myanmar. That disregard only heightens the need for the Security Council to take additional measures to safeguard peace, prosperity and security in Myanmar and the region. We must use all tools at our disposal to support ASEAN's efforts. We look forward to further discussions to address those concerns.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Recently, the Rakhine state of Myanmar has seen renewed fighting. The briefers have just updated us on the latest situation, the Myanmar authorities have publicly stated their position on the conflict and the parties concerned have done the same.

The conflict in Rakhine state is, essentially, an internal affair for Myanmar. The international community should stay objective and impartial and, in the interest of respecting Myanmar's sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity and national unity, should encourage and bring the parties concerned to bridge their differences through dialogue and consultation so as to achieve a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities as soon as possible and work together to safeguard the peace and stability of Myanmar.

As a friendly neighbour of Myanmar, China has been closely following the developments in Rakhine state and is continuing its efforts to promote peace and dialogue through multiple channels. We hope that the parties concerned will exercise maximum restraint, stop fighting as soon as possible, protect the safety and security of civilians and resolve problems through dialogue and consultation. As we speak, a Chinese delegation is visiting Myanmar to carry out communication and mediation efforts on the situation in Rakhine state. China will continue to play a constructive role in stabilizing the situation on the ground as soon as possible.

Since conflict broke out in Rakhine state in 2017, large numbers of people have entered Bangladesh to escape the chaos. The Government of Bangladesh and the local people have provided generous assistance to the refugees and have made great sacrifices. China appreciates Bangladesh's efforts and contributions.

Fundamentally, bringing those who have escaped turmoil back to their homeland must be achieved gradually through dialogue and consultations between Myanmar and Bangladesh. The recent surge of fighting in Rakhine state has indeed had an impact on the repatriation process. We should note that through the coordination and facilitation by countries of the region and the United Nations, Myanmar and Bangladesh have built a good foundation for promoting repatriation. Moreover, their desire and determination to continue such cooperation remains unchanged. The international community needs to continue supporting the efforts of the two countries to engage in direct dialogue and enhance mutual understanding and trust so as to create favourable conditions and an enabling environment for the repatriation process.

Both Myanmar and Bangladesh are friendly neighbours to China, which has been actively undertaking diplomatic efforts to facilitate repatriation.

We have put forward a three-stage approach to resolve the Rakhine issue and have provided many shipments of humanitarian assistance to Myanmar and Bangladesh. We have facilitated important common understandings reached between the two sides. China stands ready to continue its support and assistance for the early resolution of the repatriation issue.

The subject of this meeting is the situation in Rakhine state. Some members also talked about the political situation in Myanmar. I would like to point out that there are no quick fixes, let alone an external solution to the Myanmar issue. Ultimately, whether it can be properly resolved depends — and can depend — only on Myanmar itself. Be it a democratic transition or national reconciliation, it is up to all Myanmar parties and factions to take action in the best interests of the country and its people and solve problems through dialogue and consultation within the framework of the Constitution and the law.

Myanmar is an important member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) family. Since the beginning of the year, thanks to the facilitation by the Lao chairmanship of ASEAN and the efforts of its members, ASEAN has made positive progress in engaging Myanmar and providing humanitarian assistance. The international community should continue supporting ASEAN's leading role, respect the ASEAN way, promote ASEAN solidarity and maintain the hard-won positive momentum.

A few Council members stated that the Council should take further steps and even impose sanctions on Myanmar. China is against such an approach, as doing so would only aggravate hostilities and confrontation.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that China is connected with Myanmar by mountains and rivers and that China's policy of friendship with Myanmar extends to all the people of Myanmar. We sincerely hope that Myanmar will enjoy political and social stability and economic development and prosperity. China has always provided, and will continue to provide, assistance to the best of its abilities and to play a constructive role to that end.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Malta.

I begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Khiari and Director Doughten for their briefings.

Only two months ago, the Council convened (see S/PV.9541) to consider the dire situation in Myanmar three years after the coup. Since then, the junta's atrocities have escalated, inflicting untold suffering upon civilians, particularly in Rakhine state.

We are deeply alarmed by the escalation of the conflict in Rakhine state. Reports of indiscriminate air strikes by the military, including those in Minbya township three weeks ago that reportedly killed and injured many civilians, among them children, are extremely troubling. We strongly condemn such actions.

That brutality is made possible by the continuous inflow of arms, weapons and technology from external sources into Myanmar. We continue to call on the Council to continue to reassess the situation in Myanmar and to interrupt the military's access to weapons and related material, including jet fuel, that are used to carry out such crimes.

The activation of the conscription law marks a new low in the junta's campaign against the very people it is supposed to protect. By forcibly recruiting young men and women, the junta not only perpetuates its reign of terror but also enhances its capacity to carry out more atrocities while terrorizing the population.

The situation is deteriorating by the hour, as young persons are forced to flee the country to avoid conscription. Women and girls are increasingly vulnerable to early marriage, trafficking and other forms of exploitation and gender-based violence. Women's human rights defenders and civil society organizations in Myanmar are on the front lines of the response. They need urgent support, and the substantial restrictions on their operations must be lifted.

In Rakhine state, the Rohingya are now being coerced into fighting for an institution that has systematically stripped them of their rights, persecuted them and denied their access to basic services. Malta reiterates its calls for accountability and its support for the role of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar and of investigations or proceedings by national, regional or international courts and tribunals, including by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Malta thanks Bangladesh for offering shelter to almost 1 million displaced Rohingya refugees.

Today we join others in reaffirming, once again, the centrality of the role of Association of Southeast

Asian Nations in that process and reaffirm our support for its mediation efforts, in line with the five-point consensus. However, recent events have demonstrated the need for the Council to do more.

The violence we continue to witness across Myanmar requires meaningful follow-up by the Security Council. Sixteen months after the adoption of resolution 2669 (2022), the Council's call for an immediate end to all violence in Myanmar has not been respected. We must not be under any illusions — effective solutions demand the Security Council's decisive action. We look forward to the appointment of a Special Envoy in the coming days. And it is incumbent upon the Council to unequivocally stand with the people of Myanmar. The Council needs to ensure that the violence ends once and for all, followed by the return of civilian rule, inclusive of democracy and the rule of law. The time for decisive action is now.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Abd Karim (Malaysia): Malaysia would like to thank Malta for convening today's open briefing. Malaysia also wishes to thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Director Lisa Doughten for their briefings.

Malaysia remains deeply concerned and appalled by the developments in Myanmar, especially the reports of increasing violence and human rights violations against the people in Rakhine state.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in March, reported that an estimated 148,500 people have been newly displaced in Rakhine and Paletwa in Chin since the informal ceasefire broke down in November last year. The intensification of air strikes and artillery shelling, affecting 15 out of 17 townships in Rakhine, may result in a surge of displaced persons, predominantly among the already vulnerable Rohingya people.

Malaysia condemns the brutal acts of violence, displacement and oppression perpetrated against the Rohingya. We are also deeply disturbed by recent reports by the United Nations indicating forced recruitment and Rohingyas being used as human shields by the military. The international community cannot remain silent in the face of such atrocities. We must not allow international attention to this crisis to wane.

In that regard, we demand immediate and concrete actions to cease the violence, protect civilians and ensure unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need without discrimination. The international community's support for the efforts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) through the five-point consensus is important. That includes the full and effective implementation of resolution 2669 (2022).

The root cause must also be addressed. The laws and policy that denies the Rohingya their fundamental rights to citizenship have perpetuated the misinformation and racism against them. They have rendered the Rohingya stateless and clearly violated international human rights law.

Sustained humanitarian assistance and political support are essential in ensuring the safety and security of all communities in Rakhine state and in facilitating the safe, voluntary and dignified return of displaced Rohingya to their place of origin in Rakhine state. The international community must do more to provide a coordinated and sustained response to the situation in Myanmar. We should do more to create an environment conducive to the restoration of democracy in Myanmar. The aspirations and interests of the people of Myanmar remain paramount and must be fulfilled.

Malaysia continues to host the largest number of Rohingya refugees in South-East Asia. We urge the international community to support efforts for their repatriation or resettlement to third countries. Malaysia remains steadfast in working with other ASEAN member States and the international community to end the deplorable violence and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Prabowo (Indonesia): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this important briefing. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Director Lisa Doughten for their insightful briefings.

Indonesia is deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Myanmar. The estimate of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs that a staggering 18.6 million people, or one third of the population, require humanitarian assistance in 2024 is indeed disturbing.

Intensifying violence in Rakhine state is also worrisome. That will lead only to more civilians

casualties and displacement. Currently, 2.7 million people are displaced across Myanmar, and more than 1 million Rohingya refugees are seeking refuge across borders. Many of the refugees have become victims to human trafficking and people smuggling, including thousands who landed in Indonesia. That has further amplified their hardship and complicated the situation on the ground. All of that demonstrates that these crises are interrelated, complex and require a comprehensive approach.

In that regard, allow me to highlight three key points.

First, Indonesia reaffirms its position on the five-point consensus as the main reference in resolving the political crisis in Myanmar, including with regard to Rakhine state. That is the framework through which we are addressing the root causes of the crisis. Indonesia, through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), will continue to work with all parties to achieve peace, stability and a Myanmar-owned and Myanmar-led political solution. We invite external partners and key neighbouring countries to support ASEAN and the implementation of the five-point consensus.

Secondly, the Rohingya issue must be an integral part of achieving a peaceful and comprehensive solution to the current crisis in Myanmar. The home of the Rohingya is in Myanmar, and we must work hard to make their return to Myanmar voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable. Indonesia looks forward to the implementation of the agreements to resume the repatriation of verified displaced persons, as well as the comprehensive needs assessment, which will effectively facilitate the repatriation process for displaced persons from Rakhine. In addition, we must also mobilize and increase international assistance to the Rohingya refugees, including in Cox's Bazaar. In that context, Indonesia appreciates Bangladesh's support in sheltering the Rohingya refugees.

Strengthened cooperation is also needed to prevent the Rohingya refugees from falling prey to human traffickers. For our part, Indonesia is committed to intensifying cooperation within the framework of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, connecting countries of origin, transit and destination in addressing human trafficking.

Thirdly, we must ensure unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance. The humanitarian crisis is getting worse by the day. In January, ASEAN provided humanitarian aid to 13,135 refugees. Indonesia also contributed food aid worth \$250,000 through the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) and will send vaccines for children. We appreciate the initiatives of Thailand and Myanmar for cross-border humanitarian aid and emphasize the importance of inclusivity and the role of the AHA Centre in their implementation.

The longer the conflict in Myanmar persists, the more problems there will be that will be shouldered by the region. Therefore, in addressing the Myanmar issue, we must also address the Rohingya issue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Muhith (Bangladesh): We thank you, Madam President, for convening this briefing and for providing us the opportunity to speak before the Council on this very important issue. We appreciate the efforts of the United Kingdom and other the Council members in organizing this long-overdue meeting. We also thank the briefers, Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari and Director Lisa Doughten, for their informative briefings.

Since 2017, the Council has heard a number of times how severely the crisis in Rakhine has impacted Bangladesh — which has been hosting more than 1 million Rohingya minorities, who fled their homes in Rakhine in the face of mass atrocity crimes and systematic persecution.

Today, while we are still awaiting a solution to the 2017 crisis, we are faced with renewed risks of cross-border implications of the conflicts in Rakhine. The situation in Rakhine has gone from bad to worse with the resumption of conflict between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army. The civilians, especially the Rohingya minorities, are once again the main victims. They are now facing difficult choices — between forced recruitment by the Myanmar military or fleeing to Arakan Army-controlled villages where the risks of communal violence are on the rise. The impacts of the conflict have also been exacerbated by continued restrictions on movements and communications, limited economic activities and the lack of adequate humanitarian aid. We are also witnessing desperate attempts by members of Myanmar's border and security

forces to take shelter in Bangladesh in order to escape heavy fighting with the Arakan Army in Rakhine state. The fighting has also resulted in the death of two persons and injuries to several others inside Bangladesh. The situation poses genuine threats to Bangladesh and its people living in the border districts. In fact, if not resolved swiftly, the ongoing conflict in Rakhine can potentially threaten the peace and stability of the entire region.

The recent escalation in Rakhine has also affected the pace of the preparations for the repatriation of the Rohingyas to Myanmar, which is the ultimate solution to the crisis and also the desire of the Rohingyas. That is yet another crucial source of tensions, particularly in the Rohingya camps and surrounding host communities in Cox's Bazar, where frustration is growing at the lack of progress on repatriation.

We remain hopeful that repatriation will commence as soon as conditions improve. We call for a demonstration of genuine political will on the part of Myanmar to cooperate with us in the implementation of the bilateral arrangements of return signed in 2017 and 2018. We also continue to ask the international community, especially regional organizations and regional and neighbouring countries, for meaningful and effective engagement to restore peace and stability in Rakhine and to support the reintegration of the future returnees.

As we have said on a number of occasions in the Council, Bangladesh has been engaged with Myanmar from the very beginning in its efforts to resolve the crisis peacefully. We signed three bilateral agreements to facilitate return and continue to make every effort possible to implement them. Notably, resolution 2669 (2022) on Myanmar also encouraged "diplomatic efforts between the parties concerned to help address the issues facing Rohingyas" (*para. 10*). However, no progress could be made in the past six years. Not a single Rohingya could be repatriated under those bilateral agreements.

In that regard we wish to once again recall resolution 2669 (2022), which underscored the need "to create conditions necessary for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees and displaced persons", as well as "the need to address the root causes" (*ibid.*). The root causes of the vulnerability of the Rohingya minorities are entrenched mostly in Myanmar's discriminatory legal

and political framework. Unless those underlying causes are addressed, bilateral and regional efforts are unlikely to succeed.

Allow me to share some of our expectations as a neighbouring and affected country.

First, despite serious risks of civilian suffering, the presence of the United Nations in Myanmar has not been strong enough in recent times. The position of Special Envoy remained vacant for nearly a year. The position of Humanitarian Coordinator has also long been vacant, while nearly 18 million people in Myanmar are in need of humanitarian aid, including 1.7 million in Rakhine alone. We believe that the absence of a Special Envoy and a Humanitarian Coordinator is seriously limiting the active engagement in Myanmar of the United Nations and the international community, including in Rakhine state. We urge the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations presence in Myanmar at all levels without further delay.

Secondly, although resolution 2669 (2022) demanded an immediate end to all forms of violence in Myanmar and urged restraint and the de-escalation of tensions and also made important calls including to address the root causes of the crisis in Rakhine, it did not set out any regular reporting cycle on the progress of its implementation, except for a one-time briefing by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy. We believe that the provision of periodic reporting would ensure continued attention to the crisis in Rakhine and help to prevent its escalation.

Thirdly, the ongoing accountability processes and their outcomes, including the provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice, provide a solid basis for the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, to take concrete measures to end impunity for the crimes committed against Rohingya Muslims in 2017. We call upon the Council to follow up on those accountability processes. We further urge the Council to also address ongoing violations of international humanitarian law in Rakhine.

Fourthly, the memorandum of understanding among the Myanmar Government, the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, are important instruments that can help to address the root causes of conflict in Rakhine and create a conducive environment.

We call for their timely and meaningful implementation. We also reiterate our call for the dismantlement of the existing ghetto-like camps for internally displaced person in Rakhine state, where nearly 150,000 Rohingya Muslim inmates have been detained for over a decade in inhuman conditions, as a major confidence-building measure for the commencement of repatriation and for their reintegration.

Finally, we wish to recall the obligations of the interested international partners regarding their role, especially support for the creation of a sustainable environment in Rakhine, which would ensure reintegration of the Rohingyas as equal members of Myanmar society while guaranteeing their basic human rights. In the absence of such a balanced approach, no amount of investment or support will be good enough to bring peace and development to Rakhine, or Myanmar as a whole.

In conclusion, we would like to mention that Bangladesh has no intention of interfering in the

internal affairs of Myanmar. Indeed, as an immediate neighbour, we would like to see a peaceful, prosperous and harmonious Myanmar. However, as the country most affected by the Rohingya crisis, especially since 2017, we remain deeply concerned by the escalation of conflict and violence in the country. That is causing enormous suffering for the Rohingya minorities, both those who remain and those who have been forcibly displaced. That is also making the commencement of the repatriation process more and more difficult and creating a host of social, economic, environmental and security problems for Bangladesh.

We believe that the situation warrants further attention and meaningful action on the part of the Council, with a view to achieving, among other things, a comprehensive and sustainable solution of the Rohingya crisis.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.