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### **Press Release on Repatriation of Displaced Hindus**

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has been taking several measures for the early repatriation of the displaced persons including 444 people of Hindu faith from Rakhine State. Since their displacement in 2017, the said Hindus have been expressing their desire to return to Myanmar through the Hindu elders. Repeated requests from Myanmar to Bangladesh for the earliest repatriation of the 444 Hindus have yet to facilitate.

In this connection, U Soe Han, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs met H.E. Mr. Manjurul Karim Khan Chowdhury, Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on 5 September 2019 at the Ministry in Nay Pyi Taw and the Permanent Secretary reiterated Myanmar's call to repatriate the 444 Hindus soonest.

Although the displaced persons in Bangladesh were neither informed about the repatriation process nor their return was facilitated by the Bangladesh authorities, over two hundred displaced persons have returned to Rakhine State of their own volition. The returnees include both Muslims and Hindus including eight Hindu women along with their children who witnessed the massacre committed by ARSA against forty five Hindu men near Bawtala village on 25 August 2017.

On 11 September 2019 in Sittwe, a delegation led by U Khin Maung Tin, Deputy Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor, met the returnees including the said Hindu women. The delegation includes the Ambassadors and diplomats from the embassies of ASEAN countries, China, India and Bangladesh together with the representatives from UNDP and UNHCR. The delegation also met the Muslim returnees on 12 September 2019 in Sittwe. The returnees confirmed the killings, threats and intimidations by the members of ARSA prevent the return of displaced persons currently residing in Bangladesh. It is necessary to create conducive environment inside the camps in Bangladesh so that the displaced persons could express their willingness to return without fear by ensuring their safety and security.

While Myanmar reiterates its call to Bangladesh to commence the repatriation of the displaced persons particularly the 444 Hindus, Myanmar stands ready to continue its cooperation with Bangladesh in implementing the existing bilateral agreements for the repatriation of the displaced persons.

Myanmar Embassy, Rome

25 September 2019