



MYANMAR

Statement

by

His Excellency U Khin Yi

Union Minister for Immigration and Population

of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

at the Intergovernmental Event at the Ministerial Level

of Member States of the United Nations

on the Occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the 1951 Convention

Relating to the Status of Refugees and

the 50th Anniversary of the 1961 Convention

on the Reduction of Statelessness

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Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentleman,

On behalf of the Delegation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I would like to congratulate you on your election as the Chair of this meeting. It is a great honour for me to speak on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey our warm greetings and deep appreciation to the distinguished High Commissioner for his tireless endeavours to overcome the persistent challenges of refugee-related issues around the world.

Mr. President,

Allow me to highlight the recent developments and significant changes taking place in Myanmar. As you are aware, a constitutional Government has been in place, effective 30 March 2011. Since then the new Government has begun launching a series of economic, social and policy reforms to improve the socio-economic status of the people. Through this reform, the Government is now implementing the objectives which were outlined in the inaugural speech of the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Some of the priorities of the new Government are to achieve good governance, clean government, fundamental rights of the citizens, rule of law, transparency and accountability.

Mr. President,

Let me now turn to the question of refugee and statelessness. Myanmar is home to over 100 national races and its population has reached 60.38 million this year. The country's border line stretches about 5200 miles and sharing over 3800 miles on land with neighbouring countries. Myanmar is situated between the world's two most populous countries and also shares a border with a country about one third the size of

Myanmar but hosting a population about three times the size of ours. These geographic and demographic factors have led to a long history of illegal migration across the border into Myanmar. As a result, there are a large number of aliens in the border areas, especially in the Northern Rakhine State. This situation complicates the normal life of local populace. Consequently, it necessitates us to take appropriate measures based on national interest and national security grounds and to carefully verify the nationality of the residing population along the border areas. It takes time to address this question as the situation in the border areas are quite complex.

In Article 3 of the Myanmar Citizenship Law (1982), Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bama, Mon, Rakhine, Shan and other national groups who have settled in any of the territories within the State as their permanent home prior to 1823 AD (1185 ME) are defined as Myanmar citizens. According to this law, anyone who is not component of our national races needs to submit certifications to prove his or her true national identity.

The existing law does not allow the dual citizenship. Former Myanmar citizens who want to reclaim the Myanmar citizenship must legally denounce the citizenship of another country. Therefore, citizenship verification processes are carried out in line with the existing laws. The citizenship scrutiny cards or associate citizen certificates or naturalized citizenship certificates are issued to those who meet the citizenship criteria respectively. For those whose citizenship status is of dubious nature are entitled to apply for the temporary identity certificate. Article 65 of the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law, allows those who carries temporary identity certificates to apply for naturalized citizenship to the Central Body established by the Government. Up to now, over one hundred and twenty three thousand persons were granted as naturalized citizens and over twenty seven thousand persons were granted associate citizenships. To date, over eight hundred thousand temporary identity certificates have been issued. Out of that number, over one hundred thousand people have been granted with

naturalized citizenships. Everyone in Myanmar, regardless of race or religion, holds an identification card of one kind or another.

Mr. President,

Allow me to touch briefly on the foreign policy of my country. The new Government continues to pursue the independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy. In line with this foreign policy, we will continue to maintain friendly relations with countries in the world particularly with our neighbours. We will also continue to cooperate with the United Nations and other international and regional organizations.

Mr. President,

Myanmar stands together with millions of people around the world who are living without a nationality. We support efforts to strengthen and enhance protection and assistance to refugees through international cooperation in a spirit of solidarity, responsibility and burden-sharing among all States.

Mr. President,

In concluding, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciations to the organizers of this important event. I strongly believe that this gathering will create better understanding among us and pave the way for concrete cooperation among States to address the questions relating to the refugee protection and statelessness in the world.

I do hope that, under your able guidance and leadership, this important event will bear fruitful results and provide further momentum in addressing the global question of the refugees and statelessness.

Thank you very much for your attention.