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NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Ceremony to clarify true situation in response to statement of UN Country Team held UN Country Team in Myanmar ignores achievements of education sector, emphasizes on old and outdated data Such kind of false expression may affect credibility of UN



Nay Pyi Taw, 2 Nov- The United Nations (UN) Country Team in Myanmar issued a statement concerning Myanmar on 24th October, 2007.

The statement said that it is urgently needed to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country; and that although it acknowledged the efforts of Myanmar government to build schools, hospitals and roads, there were no fundamental rights of people.

Although Myanmar is fully cooperating with the United Nations, the statement of the UN Country Team tarnishes the image of Myanmar by feeding the international community with wrong information.

On 25 October, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar sent a letter to the UN Country Team in Yangon to strongly reject the unusual statement.

On 31 October, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs again sent a letter to UN Secretary-General's office to reject the unusual statement saying that the statement is not in conformity with the motto of UN Day 2007, that the facts on social standard, social, health and education sectors mentioned in the statement are not based on firm evidences or true data and thus it does not reflect the objective conditions of Myanmar.

Moreover, a ceremony to clarify the true situation in response to the statement of UN Country team in Myanmar was held at the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development here at 11.10 am today.

Present on the occasion were Minister for National Planning and Economic Development U Soe Tha, Attorney-General U Aye Maung, Deputy Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Col Thurein Zaw, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Thu, ambassadors, Charges d' Affaires ai, and diplomats, the UN Resident Coordinator and representatives of UN agencies, departmental heads, officials of social organizations and invited guests.

Minister U Soe Tha explained the situation concerning the statement issued by UN Country Team in Myanmar on 24 October.

The following is the clarification made by Minister U Soe Tha-

The United Nations (UN) Country Team in Myanmar issued the Statement on the United Nations Day, 24th October, 2007.

The UN Country Team stated that many of fundamental rights such as achieving development, prosperity, peace, security and dignity are not yet a reality for the people in Myanmar and that the people struggle everyday to meet basic needs and the urgent necessity to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country.

The statement is one-sided and entirely ignores Myanmar's present development situation.

Regarding Myanmar's development, a Press Conference was held on 17th December 2006 and Myanmar social economic development was presented thoroughly at that Press Conference. The topics included economic growth, trade, investment, infrastructure development and development initiatives.

The Country's economic system was changed into market oriented system in 1988. Short-term economic plans were implemented commencing 1992-1993. During the plan periods, the country's economy increased by 1.3 times in the first four-year, 1.5 times in the second five-year and 1.8 times in the third five-year plans respectively.

In implementing the short-term four-year and five-year plans, the agriculture sector expanded by 1.3, 1.4 and 1.6 times, industry sector expanded by 1.6, 1.7 and 2.9 times and services sector also expanded by 1.3, 1.5 and 1.9 times respectively. The total sown area had increased to 50.9 million acres from 23.8 million acres showing an

increase of 2.1 times. A total of 197 new dams and reservoirs were built during the last 18 years beginning 1988-89.

Per capita GDP had increased by 3 times in the first four-year plan, 3.7 times in the second five-year plan and 4.3 times in the third five-year plan. Per capita GDP was 295,774 kyats in the year 2006-2007.

The United Nations Country Team stated that Myanmar's estimated per capita GDP is less than half of that of Cambodia or Bangladesh. Myanmar is one of the countries in the transitional economy. She has not reached fully market economic system yet as well as not yet fully integrated into the world economy. The current foreign exchange rate does not represent a true exchange rate. Per capita GDP in dollar deriving from using market current exchange rate does not represent true per capita GDP.

The Integrated Household Living Condition Assessment Project was jointly implemented by UNDP and Myanmar in 2004. The survey result indicated that the proportion of people below the poverty line at the union level stood at 32%. The ADB Key indicators for 2007 shows the proportion of people below poverty line in Bangladesh is 40% in 2005, 34.7% in Cambodia in 2004 and 32.7% in Lao PDR in 2003. It can be observed that the proportion of people below poverty line in Myanmar is not much different from that of neighbouring countries. The survey result also indicated that Myanmar's poverty line for 2004 was 162,136 kyats, whereas the per capita GDP for the year 2004 was 167,202 kyats. Thereby, the per capita GDP was higher than the poverty line at that particular year.

The share of food expenditure in Myanmar is 68.2% of total expenditure and UN Country Team described 7% lower than the actual figure. In the year 2006-2007, the production of rice, meat, fish and prawn increased by 2.4, 5.6 and 4.2 times respectively than that of 1988.

In Myanmar, shelter is one of the basic needs. According to the survey results, 94.2% of population owns their dwellings and 99% of households have access to secure tenure.

The shares of expenditure for agricultural sector, processing and manufacturing sectors, construction sector and social sector are the highest in the total budget during the last six years. The expenditure for social sector increased yearly and spent at least 8% and above. The expenditure for the social sector increased between 30% to 60% every year. The share was 12.4% in the last year.

The expenditure for education sector increased between 40% to 65% every year and the health expenditure increased around 100 per cent every year in the last six years with the exception of the year 2005-2006.

As regards the education sector, the UN Country Team's statement has incorrectly presented the fact that the number of children who completed the basic education in Myanmar is less than 50% of total number of children.

The Ministry of Education has given official presentation on the efforts made for the upgrading of education sector as well as achievements in Myanmar in the Press Conference held early December 2006 in Nay Pyi Taw. However, the UN Country Team in Myanmar has ignored the achievements of education sector and emphasized on the old and outdated data. Such kind of false expression may affect the credibility of the United Nations.

In reality, the rate of students who have completed the primary education and attended the middle school has reached to 78.35% in 2006 from 45.6% in 1998. The Ministry of Education has launched the Thirty-Year Education Plan and six phases of 5-year programmes in order to upgrade the education sector in Myanmar.

The total number of high school in 2007 has increased to 190% comparing with that of the year 1988. Likewise the number of middle school increased by 53.8%, teachers increased by 49.3% and total students increased by 49.6%.

A total of 1,037 schools have been opened in the border areas and attended by more than 180,000 students. Students who have completed the primary education could be able to pursue middle school education through the expansion of post primary school every year, and a total of 6,200 post primary schools have already been opened up to 2007.

?All School Age Children in School Programme? has been launched throughout the country and as a result, school intake rate has reached to 98.01%. The literacy rate is 94.75%. Necessary measures have been taken to meet the international level of curricula and syllabuses of the basic education.

At the same time, the quality of teachers have also been upgraded.

The statement issued by the UN Country Team disregarded the advancement of education sector and only pointed out incorrect figures on education sector. These facts have reflected that some of the UN agencies have been used by some big powers as against the host country.

The statement also mentioned that one in three children under five are suffering from malnutrition in the health sector.

The indicator in Myanmar, regarding, malnutrition of children under five year underweight decreased from 38.6% in 1997 to 35.3% in 2000 and 31.8% in 2003. In this regard, the trend is positive.

Malnutrition of under five children is not specific in Myanmar only but it is also prevalent in some Asian Countries with 45.2%, 40% and 28.4%.

The statement mentioned that seven hundred thousand people suffered from malaria each year in Myanmar. The malaria morbidity rate has decreased from 24.5 per 1,000 population to 9.7 per 1,000 population as compared to the last 18 years. Likewise, the malaria mortality rate has come down from 10.4 per 100,000 population to 2.9 per 100,000 population as compared to the last 18 years.

The UN Country Team also stated that one hundred and thirty thousand people suffer from Tuberculosis. In fact, the National Tuberculosis Programme has been implemented since 1994 and as a result Case Detection Rate (CDR) has increased from 33% in 1994 to 43% in 1998, 73% in 2003 and 86% in 2006 respectively. Similarly, Treatment Success Rate (TSR) has also increased from 78% in 1994 to 83% in 1998 and 85% in 2005. The UN Country Team has ignored the positive trend of the health indicators and pointed out the only dark side of the coin. The statement also mentioned that among patients with HIV positive, an estimated sixty thousand people needing anti-retroviral do not yet have access to this life-saving treatment. In Myanmar, National AIDS programme has been launched and concerted efforts

have been made in collaboration with the UN agencies, International NGOs as well as regional organizations.

According to the finding of the HIV/AIDS projection and demographic impact analysis workshop conducted in 2007, HIV prevalence in Myanmar has reduced from 0.94% in 2000 to 0.67% in 2007.

The statement portrayed that Myanmar has not taken any measures for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, which is one sided view of UN Country Team.

In the UN ESCAP's publication titling 'A Future Within Reach' which assesses the progress towards achieving MDG in the Asia and the Pacific region, Myanmar is shown as on track for malnourishment, reaching grade 5 and early achiever for water and sanitation.

Regarding peace and security, although Myanmar gained independence in 1948, because of the existence of insurgency, peace and stability could not be attained.

Presently 17 out of 18 armed groups have returned to the legal fold and Myanmar is now unprecedentedly having peace and security throughout the country.

The indicator measuring the poverty is poverty gap. According to the results from the integrated Household Surveys, Myanmar's poverty gap is just 0.07. ADB key indicators for 2007 shows the poverty gap in Cambodia is 3.6 (2004), 6.6 (2002) in Lao and 8.4 (2005) in Bangladesh. The UN Country Team's statement has highlighted the poverty and suffering in Myanmar. In reality, the poverty in Myanmar is not very different from the neighbouring developing countries and the suffering is not to the extent as exaggerated by the UN Country Team.

The ceremony ended at 12.30 pm.