

Myanmar 'resolutely rejects' ICC ruling on Rakhine; voices 'serious concerns' over UN human rights report

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly's annual debate, a minister from Myanmar "resolutely rejected" an International Criminal Court (ICC) ruling in connection with the country's restive Rakhine state, underscoring that the tribunal has "no jurisdiction over Myanmar whatsoever."

"The ICC decision was made on dubious legal grounds and applied to a situation where domestic remedies have not yet been exhausted," said Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

"Such action can only erode the moral and legal authority of the Court," he said, noting that his country is "committed to ensuring accountability where there is evidence of human rights violations committed in Rakhine state."

In his address, the Minister also voiced "serious concerns" over a report by the UN Human Rights Council [Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar](#), noting his Government's objection to the Mission's establishment, composition, and mandate.

"At a time when we are working hard to build harmony on the ground, we are concerned that the release of this report based on narratives and not on hard evidence will only serve to inflame tensions further and potentially hinder our efforts to create the much-needed social cohesion in Rakhine state."

In its [report](#), published on 27 August, the Fact-Finding Mission [found patterns](#) of gross human rights violations and abuses committed in Kachin, Rakhine and Shan states that "undoubtedly amount to the gravest crimes under international law", principally by Myanmar's military, the Tatmadaw, but also by other security forces. It documented mass killings, the scorching of Rohingya settlements and large-scale gang rape and other sexual violence by Tatmadaw soldiers.

Minister Tint Swe went on to stress that accountability "must apply equally to all" and that "individuals, organizations, national governments, as well as multilateral organizations, must be held responsible for the consequences of their words and actions."

Further in his address, the Minister informed the General Assembly of the recent establishment of an Independent Commission of Enquiry, which will investigate all violations of human rights and atrocities committed in Rakhine state "as part of our efforts to address the issues of accountability, reconciliation, peace, stability, and development in our country."

“We hope that, alongside the Rakhine Advisory Commission’s recommendations, the work of the Independent Commission of Enquiry will become an important guiding light for the resolution of long out reached problems in the Rakhine state.”

He also noted that resolving the issue in Rakhine state is an important component of Myanmar’s democratic process, noting that the Government of Myanmar sympathizes “deeply with the displaced persons especially women and children” and that it has steps for the early repatriation of all displaced persons from Rakhine, who are verified as residents of the state.

Recalling the bilateral agreements signed with Bangladesh concerning returns, the Minister called on the country to fulfil its commitments in accordance those agreements “to allow, without delay the return of verified persons under voluntary, safe and dignified conditions.” Implementation of the bilateral agreements is the only way to resolve the issue swiftly and peacefully, he added.

Also in his address, Minister Tint Swe spoke about his Government’s efforts to transform Myanmar into a democratic nation; bring about sustainable development; and build a society where stability, peace, and harmony prevail.

[Full statement available here.](#)

[Malaysian Prime Minister paints dismal world picture, underscores need for UN reform](#)

In the 15 years since he last addressed the General Assembly, little has changed in the world and it is in far worse shape now than it was then, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad lamented in his speech to world leaders gathered at the United Nations.

“Today, the world is in a state of turmoil economically, socially and politically,” said Prime Minister Mahathir, who, in May defeated the political party that had been ruling Malaysia since its independence – over 60 years ago.

Moreover, countries are reeling under the pain inflicted by a trade war between the most powerful economies; there is international political turmoil; savage conflicts and widespread terrorism are killing millions; and budgets that should be devoted to helping the poor are being used to buy and maintain expensive weapons of war, he said.

“There is something wrong with our way of thinking, with our value system ... we still believe that conflict between nations can be resolved with war,” added the Malaysian Prime Minister.

He went on to say that “free trade” means “no protection” for small countries and their small industries, with simple products of the poor subjected to clever barriers that prevent their sale to rich markets. At the same time, globalization, despite its benefits, has imperilled the independence of smaller countries.

Applauding the efforts of the UN to end poverty, protect the environment and bring peace to all countries, Prime Minister Mahathir, underscored the need for reform in the Organization, particularly the Security Council.

“Five countries on the basis of their 70-year-old war victories cannot claim to have a right to hold the world to ransom forever,” he said, underling the need to reform the veto rights in the Security Council.

In addition, he declared that a world without the UN would be a disaster and called for the Organization to receive sufficient funding.

“No one should threaten it with financial deprivation.”

Concluding his address, Mr. Mahathir said that after 15 years, and at the age of 93, he returned to the General Assembly “with the heavy task of bringing the voice and hope of the new Malaysia to the world stage.”

“We look toward the UN to hear our pleas.”

[Full statement available here.](#)

[Path to solving global challenges ‘is clear;’ it will take a strong UN to lead the way, Denmark tells General Assembly](#)

All parts of the United Nations “must embrace this opportunity to change and create real improvements to the benefit of the people,” Ulla Tørnæs, Denmark’s Minister for Development Cooperation, said on Friday, stressing that the world body’s Member States had thrown their support behind the Secretary-General’s ambitions reform agenda and now it was time to make those proposals a reality.

“Denmark intends, for example, to contribute more than \$10 million to support

the establishment of the new Resident Coordinator system “and we encourage others to follow suit,” she told delegations gathered for the General Assembly’s annual general debate.

On gender equality and women’s rights, Ms. Tørnæs asserted that to maintain “peace and prosperity” gender equality is not only a “fundamental human right” but a “precondition.”

She cautioned that “when it comes to education, we can and must do better.” New technology and education go a long way to assisting the nearly 130 million girls who do not go to school.

Ms. Tørnæs next turned her focus on youth, noting that “Denmark was the first country to announce a contribution to the Secretary General’s new Youth Strategy,” as well as stressing that “we need to give young people a seat at the table.”

Touching on the issue of climate change, the Minister reaffirmed Denmark’s commitment to the [2030 Agenda](#) and the [Paris Agreement](#) .

Calling on her fellow Member States as the world’s largest humanitarian donor per capita, the Minister closed with these thoughts: “The problems facing the world are dire. We will only be successful if we act together. Multilateralism and cooperation must be the foundation.”

[Full statement available here.](#)

[‘Crisis of multilateralism’ makes world’s ills appear ‘irresolvable’, German Foreign Minister tells UN Assembly](#)

Germany’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Heiko Maas, outlined on Friday at the United Nations General Assembly a list of crises in the world, singling out “the crisis of multilateralism” as being at the root, frustrating solutions.

Syria, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Middle East and the “dramatic” global refugee situation, Mr. Maas said “these disparate conflicts reveal a bigger picture and a distinct pattern,” namely “the crisis of multilateralism,” which “makes conflicts around the world appear irresolvable.”

Mr. Maas said he used the word “appear,” to reflect “the faith we Germans

have in multilateralism," calling his country's post-World War II story "a triumph of multilateralism."

"Europe has proved to the world that multilateralism and sovereignty are not a contradiction in terms," he stated.

He drove home the value of countries working together by spotlighting Syria, where "nowhere is the crisis of multilateralism more painfully evident."

Underscoring that the civil war had become a widespread regional conflict, with potentially further escalation in the already-ravaged region, he highlighted as "a glimmer of hope," the diplomatic efforts that stemmed an escalation in Idlib.

"As the second-largest humanitarian donor, Germany is willing to provide UNHCR [the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees] with a further 116 million euros...to help Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon," announced the Foreign Minister, adding: "But others also need to step up."

Noting that sovereignty can only be safeguarded "if we work together," he spoke about the need to reform the Security Council to be more representative and inclusive.

"The world's population has more than tripled since 1945, while the number of UN Member States has almost quadrupled," he highlighted. "However, the Security Council has hardly changed at all."

Mr. Maas also noted that the UN of the 21st century must tackle root causes of conflict, which "include climate change."

"Action based solely on nationalism, with the objective of putting my country first, reaches its limits here – not least because our climate knows no borders," he asserted.

Signaling that Germany and the European Union stand by the [Paris climate agreement](#), he indicated his that the Council should prioritize higher "the devastating effects that climate change can have on the security and stability of entire countries and regions."

Calling the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development "our guiding principle" for making a better world for all people, he reflected on the [Global Compact](#) for Migration negotiations.

He heralded the fact that more than 190 Member States reached agreement "on such complex and controversial issues" as "a victory for multilateralism."

"The UN is built on our courage to reach compromises," he maintained, saying that common ground is created when we put people at the heart of what we do.

"The desire for peace and security, and the dream of a prosperous and dignified life, are things that all people share – whether they live in Baghdad, Berlin or Bamako," concluded the Foreign Minister.

[Full statement available here.](#)

[Russia's Lavrov denounces from UN podium West's 'brute force' pursuit of domination](#)

Denouncing their use of “political blackmail, economic pressure, and brute force,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov mounted the podium of the United Nations General Assembly on Friday to accuse Western States of seeking to retain their self-proclaimed status as ‘world leaders.’

“We hear loud statements that not only call into question the legal validity of international treaties, but also declare the priority of self-serving unilateral approaches over the decisions taken in the framework of the United Nations,” he told world leaders on the fourth day of the Assembly’s annual general debate.

He specifically cited the United States unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear accord with Iran, calling it an example of “belligerent revisionism” attacking the basic principles of the Middle East peace settlement and commitments within the World Trade Organization and to the multilateral [Paris climate accord](#).

“The international community has to pay a high price for the parochial, self-serving ambitions of a small group of countries,” Mr. Lavrov said.

“We are concerned about the desire to open yet another line of confrontation in Europe – this time, in the Balkans. The States of the region are being insistently drawn into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),” he said.

“Repeating the mantras about the inadmissibility of any interference in their domestic affairs, the European and US leaders in person are campaigning for the accession of the Balkan countries to the North Atlantic Alliance,” he added.

He charged that the international military presence in Kosovo authorized by the Security Council is being transformed into a US military base.

“Russia continues to do its utmost to build a world on the basis of law, truth, and justice, he pledged, and cited US President Harry Truman, a prime foe of the Soviet Union that preceded the current Russian Federation: ‘Great nations lead by the force of example rather than domination.’”

“I hope that the culture of mutually respectful dialogue will finally prevail. Russia will do its utmost to promote this goal,” Mr. Lavrov stated.

[**Full statement available here.**](#)