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SUBJECT: Instructions for UN Security Council Closed Session on
Burma on June 20, 2012

The UN Security Council will hold closed consultations on Burma on
June 20, 2012, including a briefing by Special Advisor on Burma
Vijay Nambiar, who will discuss his recent visit. USUN is
requested to draw from the below instructions as needed for its
participation in this briefing.

BEGIN TEXT

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

Talking Points/Questions:

* We wish to express our sincere thanks to Mr. Nambiar for
your dedicated work on the question of Burma, and especially for
the visit on which you have briefed us today. Your engagement with
Burma has been of great value for the United Nations in general and
for the Council in particular.

* The United States has expressed deep concern about the
ethnic and sectarian violence that broke out in western Burma's

Rakhine State June 8 and the tensions that continue to simmer between the Buddhist and Muslim, including Rohingya, communities.

* Secretary Clinton issued a statement on June 11 urging all parties to exercise restraint and calling on authorities to work with local leaders - together with Muslim, Buddhist, and ethnic representatives, including Rohingya, to halt the violence, begin a dialogue, and ensure a timely and transparent investigation that respects due process and the rule of law.

* We believe that the Burmese government's initial response has been encouraging and constructive, including President Thein Sein's timely State of Emergency and public appeal for an end to racist and religious attacks, the establishment of IDP camps and the government's request for UN humanitarian assistance. We seek a multilateral approach that further encourages an even-handed response and offers international assistance to address short-term critical humanitarian needs and provide the basis for longer term solutions (such as with national reconciliation efforts).

* As important as these concerns are, we also wish to reinforce the importance of continued progress in the reform effort, with special attention to freeing the remaining political prisoners. These issues are of ongoing importance to the Council and need to be part of all exchanges with the Burmese government.

We have some specific concerns we would like to follow up with regard to your recent visit.

Q: How can the international community can most effectively assist in de-escalating the tension and begin a process toward peaceful resolution and increased ethnic and religious tolerance and understanding?

Q: What are first steps the international community can take to address the racism and discrimination and encourage a more tolerant view both among government and civil society leaders?

Q: What is the way forward for UN agencies in Rakhine State given the security situation and the perception that the UN favors the Muslim population? Please provide an update on the delivery of humanitarian assistance to IDPs and other affected populations.

Q: We think it is essential that the United Nations work with the government of Bangladesh to ensure that it fulfills its obligations regarding Rohingya fleeing the violence. Can you inform us about how the UN plans to engage Bangladesh? And does the UN plan to engage other regional governments that also host Rohingya refugees, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand?

Q: On broader issues, the President of Burma has just announced that there will be a "second wave of reforms" in the near future. There are also reports that there will be another release of political prisoners. Did you discuss the reform process during your visit, and if so did you obtain any specifics, including information about the release of political prisoners?

Background:

Violence in Burma's Rakhine State broke out June 8-June 12 between Rakhine Buddhists and Rakhine Muslims and Rohingya. Though there have been no reports of additional violence, tensions remain high with estimates that dozens of villages have been burned and over 15,000 people have been displaced. Characterization of the violence has divided along ethnic and religious lines with Rohingya calling the events a "genocide" and the broader Burmese population alleging that "Bengali terrorists" instigated the violence. It is unclear who started the violence. On June 3 a mob reportedly killed 10 individuals affiliated with a Muslim religious organization. Some contacts claim these individuals were killed in retaliation for the rape of a Rakhine Buddhist woman on or around May 28 while others claim local authorities are not doing enough to protect against anti-Muslim discrimination and crimes.

Bangladesh has tightened border crossings with Burma and denied entry to individuals, even those injured in the fighting. Due in part to pressure from the international community, the Bangladeshi government is now quietly offering very limited assistance, including food and medical assistance, to special humanitarian cases, such as injured women and children, arriving by boat in Teknaf, Bangladesh, before returning them to Burma. The Burmese Government's response was relatively measured and encouraging, including President Thein Sein declaring a prompt state of emergency, deploying military forces to the area which appears to have dampened the attacks, and calling for an end to racist and religiously motivated violence. The UNHCR and other UN agencies and partner NGOs have pulled international staff from areas affected by the violence.

On June 19, President Thein Sein said in a "state of the union" address that there would be a "second wave of reforms" in the near future, including tentative privatization and a law on the minimum wage, as well as a foreign investment law.

END TEXT
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