



MYANMAR

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58th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Statement by
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Representative
of the Union of Myanmar

Item No.113: Promotion and protection of children's rights
in the Third Committee

New York : October 20, 2003

Mr. Chairman,

The international community has made important achievements since the World Summit for Children in 1990, and one of the major mile stones was the Special Session on Children which took place in May 2002, the very first session of the General Assembly devoted exclusively to children. The outcome document of the Special Session, " A World fit for Children" serves as a platform to build upon to ensure the rights of every child.

The Secretary-General in his report mentions that as of July 2003, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has been ratified or acceded to by 192 States, while two States had signed the Convention. We welcome these developments. The international norms and standards to ensure the rights of children are in place and there is no doubt that there is a strong political will to create a world fit for children. Issues such as communicable diseases and in particular HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, trafficking in children and lack of educational opportunities still pose major challenges in many countries and continue to negatively affect the lives of children world wide. The roots of many of these problems lie in poverty. All member states of the United Nations need to cooperate more with the relevant organs of the United Nations to be able to successfully address the problem.

Mr.Chairman,

Myanmar is fully committed to the cause of children and acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 in recognition of this commitment. The four main areas that Myanmar places special emphasis on are survival, development, protection and participation of children. Subsequently a series of national level plans to achieve the set goals were formulated and implemented.

In 1993, the Child Law was promulgated and since then, Myanmar has been implementing a National Plan of Action. Relevant Ministries as well as United Nations Agencies, namely UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, FAO and UNAIDS, in addition to national and international NGO's are involved in the implementation of this Plan of Action. Tangible outcomes have already been achieved in areas such as basic education, child health, nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation, maternal and child welfare, early child care and development and child protection.

As a result of these programmes, there has been a marked drop in infant mortality as well as under-five mortality and disease mortality. Services for children have achieved an increase in immunization coverage for those under one year of age and coverage of vitamin A supplementation for those under five years. National level accessibility to safe drinking water, utilization of sanitary latrines and household utilization of iodated salt have also seen significant increases.

There is also a special focus on minimizing the urban-rural difference in education programmes and health service delivery and in giving priority to the more inaccessible border areas.

Mr.Chairman,

The Commission on Human Rights has expressed its concern regarding illiteracy among children in many parts of the world. The Government of Myanmar also views the right to education as one of the basic human rights of a child. As such, the Government has always accorded priority to the development of the education sector in Myanmar. Currently, the Government is implementing a 30-year long term national education promotion programme to ensure that all children of school-going age have the opportunity to receive an education. There are now over forty thousand Basic Education Schools for the primary and secondary levels throughout the country in which 7.5 million students are currently enrolled. Another 890,000 students are enrolled in the country's 154 universities and colleges. The Government has allocated 39 billion kyats to the Ministry of Education for this academic year.

A recent development in the education sector is e-education. Electronic Data Broadcasting System was launched in Myanmar on 1 January, 2001 to create greater and more effective learning opportunities for all. As of 2003, (406) e-Education Learning Centres have been established to service students, parents, teachers and the local community . Over 3,000 schools have also been provided with multimedia classrooms. e-Education Resource Centres and e-Education Learning Centres have been established at the University and College level as well.

Mr.Chairman,

Since prevention and awareness creation play a crucial role in our fight against HIV/AIDS, we believe that educating the future leaders of the nation – our children – is essential. The School-based Healthy HIV/AIDS prevention Education (SHAPE) project has brought life skills based education on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) to over a million Myanmar school children ranging in ages seven through fifteen. SHAPE has been integrated into the curriculum and implementation of the project is steadily growing to cover the whole country. NGO's also play an active role in HIV prevention and care , conducting community-level peer-education projects for youth and life skills-based HIV/AIDS/STD training programmes.

Mr.Chairman,

Myanmar is unfortunately one of the few countries in the region still having to deal with the problem of armed insurgency which is the long-standing legacy of colonial rule. We are fully aware of the negative impact of armed conflict on children.

Although Myanmar is not yet a state party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Defence Services Act 1974 and War Office Council Instruction 13/73

prohibit recruitment into the Armed Forces persons under the age of 18. The Armed Forces of Myanmar is an all-volunteer force and there is neither a draft system nor forced conscription in Myanmar.

Failing to successfully counter the military operations of the Myanmar Armed Forces, terrorist groups and narco-traffickers have resorted to using the tactic of disinformation to discredit the Armed Forces. Among other allegations is the use of child soldiers.

In a spirit of cooperation with the UN and in order to show the international community that Myanmar has nothing to hide regarding this issue, the Government has invited the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict to visit Myanmar. The Special Representative is scheduled to visit the country at a mutually convenient date at the end of the year.

Mr. Chairman,

There have been developments regarding human rights in Myanmar in the recent past. A twenty-member Human Rights Committee has been formed which has held a series of human rights workshops throughout the country with the cooperation and assistance of the Australian Government. International norms and standards regarding human rights, including the rights of the child, are being disseminated to public officials. Plans are being made to reach out to the population. The first international seminar on the Rights of the Child was held in Yangon in 2001 in cooperation with international NGO's. In June 2002, the Government complied with the reporting obligation and submitted its Second Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child(CRC).

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, my delegation wishes to reiterate that Myanmar has always and continues to attach great importance to the well-being and development of all the children residing within the Union, and is doing its utmost to promote and protect their human rights.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.