

Yangon– 1 September 2020

UNITED NATIONS EXPRESSES FIRM COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT COVID-19 RESPONSE EFFORTS IN RAKHINE STATE

The United Nations reiterates its commitment to continue supporting the efforts of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, which is seeing a surge in locally transmitted cases in Rakhine State.

The United Nations and its partners have stood firmly with the Government of Myanmar in its preparedness and response efforts since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic early in 2020. This has involved support of the Government’s humanitarian, public health and socio-economic response. Efforts have involved technical and capacity building support, including delivery of 95,000 test kits to scale-up testing capacities, provision of personal protective equipment (PPE), support to migrant workers returning from abroad and socio-economic and livelihoods support. In parallel, the United Nations and international organizations have worked to ensure the continued delivery of its regular humanitarian response and development programmes.

With the recent surge of cases in Rakhine State, the United Nations and its partners have further scaled up their support to the Government at Union and State levels. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) provided an additional COVID-19 testing machine to Sittwe General Hospital, while World Health Organization (WHO) technicians helped install the machine and trained hospital staff in how to use it.

Furthermore, the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, together with partner international non-governmental organizations, have delivered thousands of sets of PPE, coveralls and medical and hygiene supplies to frontline health and aid workers in Rakhine as well as N95 and surgical masks, various types of sanitizers and infrared digital thermometers. The United Nations has also provided funds for Sittwe General Hospital, where most of the recently confirmed cases are being treated, which have been used to support the provision of ventilators, oxygen concentrators, and other critical equipment and supplies.

“The United Nations follows the recent increase in COVID-19 cases in Rakhine State with concern and congratulates the Government of Myanmar for its rapid response. The intensified testing and tracing of contacts that are underway are essential to stemming the rise in cases” said the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Ola Almgren.

“The recent surge in COVID-19 cases in Rakhine complicates the provision of ongoing humanitarian assistance and protection services to more than 670,000 vulnerable people by the UN and its partners” said Mr. Almgren. “We are working with the Government to ensure that measures aiming to reduce the speed of local transmission in Rakhine take account of and don’t inadvertently impede the humanitarian efforts on which many people in Rakhine depend”, stressed the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator.

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Access to timely and accurate information about the risks of COVID-19 as well as preventive measures is essential to ensuring people’s safety. “Nowadays, the general population actively seek this information on mobile internet,” said Mr. Almgren. “Therefore, access to functional internet that allows applications to run on mobile phones is essential and full internet service must be restored in areas currently not having such service”.

Access to communities in need in northern Rakhine and southern Chin state has also been curtailed due to the ongoing armed conflict in this area. The United Nations reiterates its call on the parties to the conflict to heed the Secretary General’s call for a global ceasefire, which was echoed by the Security Council through adoption of the Resolution 2532 on 1 July 2020, and cease hostilities to enable safe and unimpeded access to all communities in need of assistance.

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