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Press Statement

The Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has noted the Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) 2019, which contains reference on Myanmar. Prior to the announcement of the release of the annual report, USCIRF has invited the Embassy of Myanmar to provide information about the conditions of freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief in Myanmar. In response to the invitation of the USCIRF, Myanmar Embassy has provided information on freedom of religion and other related matters to the USCIRF that includes the following facts:

The Constitution of Myanmar gives equal rights to its citizens on their freedom of choice on faith and belief. The Article 34 of Charter I of the Constitution states that *“Every citizen is equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess and practice religion subject to public order, morality or health and to the other provisions of this Constitution”*. Additionally, Chapter VIII, Article 348 states that *“The Union shall not discriminate any citizen of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, based on race, birth, religion, official position, status, culture, sex and wealth”*. Furthermore, Article 362 states that *“the Union also recognizes Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Animism as the religions existing in the Union at the day of the coming into operation of this Constitution”*.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture of the Government of Myanmar is working closely with various Hindu, Christian and Islamic organizations in promoting respect for religion and cultural diversities. It is also working with local as well as international Faith/Religious Groups on their missionary works/activities in the country that include providing assistance to pilgrimages to Mecca during the month of Dhu al-Hijja and to Bodh Gaya that are partially funded by the Government.

Myanmar is a multi-cultural and religious country, major religious festivals and religious observations are recognized as gazetted holidays in the country. Government representatives not only participate in the official celebrations of these religious activities but also patronize the events.

With the aim to bring better understanding among different religious and cultural groups, and to promote peace and harmony in the country, the Government initiated the

Interfaith Group in 2008 and in 2011, the Group continues to work as non-governmental organization focusing on peaceful co-existence, preventing religious misunderstanding and arguments. Today, a total of 128 interfaith groups with members ranging from Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Hindu communities are working tirelessly throughout the country including the most remoted areas.

There are 4407 Mosques and 459 Islamic schools across the country with a mosque for every 260 Muslims. In addition, there are 6998 Churches of different denominations all over the country with a Church of worship for every 470 Christians. These statistics demonstrate the degree of freedom of religion the people in the country are enjoying. Statistical data of 1973 census showed 88 per cent of the entire population practiced Buddhism and in 2014 census, the percentage decreased to 87 per cent. The percentage of Christians grew from 4.6 to 6.2 per cent while Muslim population grew from 3.9 to 4.3 per cent.

Myanmar is a country with over a hundred ethnic groups with different religions, cultures, traditions and dialects. The Government recognizes the diversity of these groups and the challenges related to socio-economic conditions among the different communities. Based on the uniqueness of the country, the Myanmar Government is working tirelessly to build a peaceful and harmonious Union where the entire population shares equal rights, regardless of the gender, belief/faith, race or culture, under the State Constitution.

The above are some of the facts that the Embassy of Myanmar has provided to the USCIRF in connection with its 2019 report. It is highly regrettable and disappointing that none of the above are reflected in the USCIRF report.

Myanmar attaches importance to its relationship with the United States and the Government is firmly committed to work closely with the Government of the United States and other stake holders to address and resolve issues of common concern of both countries.

Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Washington D.C.
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