

For immediate release

Statement by Adama Dieng, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on his visit to Bangladesh to assess the situation of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar

(Dhaka, 13 March 2018) From 7 to 13 March I visited Bangladesh to assess the situation of the Rohingya population who have crossed the border from Myanmar to Bangladesh since the most recent incidents of violence in northern Rakhine state in October 2016 and August 2017. During my visit, I had the opportunity to meet Bangladeshi authorities, civil society actors and members of the diplomatic community. I also visited refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar, where survivors I met shared horrifying stories of what they have endured.

What I have heard and witnessed in Cox's Bazaar is a human tragedy with the fingerprints of the Myanmar government and of the international community. The scorched earth campaign carried out by the Myanmar security forces since August 2017 against the Rohingya population was predictable and preventable. Despite the numerous warnings I have made of the risk of atrocity crimes, the international community has buried its head in the sand. This has cost the Rohingya population of Myanmar their lives, their dignity and their homes.

providing support to the refugees and host communities. The social and economic strains and the environmental impact that this influx of refugees is placing on the area and the host community is clearly visible. I encourage the Bangladesh government to facilitate more dialogue between the two communities to avoid misperceptions and the build-up of tension.

I was encouraged by the commitment made by the Bangladeshi authorities I met that refugees would not be repatriated against their will. What I have heard and seen makes it clear that the majority of the Rohingya want to return to Myanmar, but only when they are able to do so in safety, dignity and with access to the basic rights that are fundamental to us all. So far, the Myanmar government has not been able to provide a safe and dignified return for the Rohingya.