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Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee
Inquiry into the state of Democracy and Human Rights in Myanmar

11:15am – 12pm, Friday 13 February 2026

DFAT OPENING STATEMENT

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee as part of your inquiry into the state of democracy and human rights in Myanmar.

It has been five years since the military coup ousted the democratically elected government of Myanmar (1 February 2021).

Since then, the situation has continued to deteriorate. Conflict is ongoing. Approximately one-third of the population, 16.2 million people, need lifesaving humanitarian assistance. 3.6 million people are internally displaced. Thousands remain unjustly detained.

The conflict has exacerbated transnational crime, including scam centres, drugs and human trafficking, and irregular people movements, posing a threat to neighbouring countries and the wider region.

Australia has consistently condemned the regime's atrocities, including ongoing attacks against civilians, including airstrikes. We strongly support ASEAN's ongoing efforts to seek a peaceful resolution to the crisis, including those of the Special Envoy.

Recent elections were held amid ongoing violence and repression, and without meaningful participation from opposition parties and the absence of large sections of the population. As the Foreign Minister said in her statement on 1 February, the elections did not meet the conditions for a free, fair and inclusive process.

Australia has consistently called for the cessation of violence, the release of all those unjustly detained, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access, and inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders.

We look to the incoming Myanmar authorities to put in place measures that reflect ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus – genuine efforts that alleviate human suffering, improve economic and social conditions and advance a sustainable resolution.

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We continue to urge a genuine transition of power to a democratic civilian government that reflects the will of the people.

We continue to support international efforts to pursue accountability for atrocities committed in Myanmar, including the work of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar.

Australia's sanctions have helped limit the availability to the regime of funds and military materiel. We maintain an arms embargo on Myanmar and support calls for a global arms embargo.

Alongside these efforts, Australia continues to stand with the people of Myanmar. Our international advocacy is backed up by our development and humanitarian assistance – \$124.8m in 2025-26. This assistance meets critical needs, including healthcare, education, food, social protection services and livelihoods support. It also supports efforts to strengthen civil society and build community resilience.

Our assistance continues to reach communities across the country, including in conflict-affected areas of Sagaing, Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Shan and Rakhine States, as well as on the Thai-Myanmar border.

Given the security situation and the risks to humanitarian personnel on the ground, we do not publicise the details of our local implementing partners.

We take proactive steps to ensure our assistance to Myanmar neither goes to the regime nor lends it credibility or legitimacy.

Since 2017, Australia has committed over \$1.26 billion in humanitarian assistance to the people of Myanmar, which also extends to the 1.2 million displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh and their host communities.

This includes a new three-year program of up to \$370 million. We have recently completed the design for this new package of assistance and our teams at Posts and in Canberra are in the process of negotiating contracts with the respective implementing partners.

Australia stands with the people of Myanmar, who continue to demonstrate such resilience in the face of such adversity.

END