



#G20RomeSummit

G20 Summit Side Event (27th October 2021)

"AVERTING CATASTROPHE IN MYANMAR: COVID19, ECONOMIC COLLAPSE AND AN EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE"

This event explores practical responses to the humanitarian catastrophe of post-coup Myanmar. It draws the attention of the international community to health system collapse, economic failure, a mounting refugee crisis and an absence of political solutions as a consequence of the attempted coup of 1 February 2021. COVID and economic failure imperil Myanmar's neighbors, and the coup presents an acute crisis for ASEAN. Witnesses will describe the current situation. Panelists will offer practical options for an effective international response.

An event promoted by Senate of the Italian Republic – an initiative of Senator Pier Ferdinando Casini

from the "Caduti di Nassirya" Room, Piazza Madama, Rome, Italy

27th of October 2021

Myanmar time: 18:30–19:30

Italian time: 14.00–15.00

Question by Moderator, Michael Marett-Crosby, CEO, Suu Foundation:

Your Excellency, you bring to this discussion your experience leading the pandemic mitigation strategy for Yangon Region before the coup. What is needed to make the international effort at COVID Vaccination successful across all of Myanmar? What is your greatest hope from this and other international gatherings at this time of such need for your people?

Answer by HE Professor Dr Zaw Wai Soe, the Union Minister for the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, National Unity Government of Myanmar:

Thank you, Michael, for your question.

Good Afternoon Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you already know, Myanmar is a country with limited resources and its healthcare is ranked lowest in the world. This is because of chronic underinvestment in health care under the military dictatorship since 1962, the first military coup in Myanmar.

In the recent five years under the new democratic government, series of health reforms were enacted, increased health expenditure up to 5.2% of GDP. This increased health spend has led to improved health indicators.

We managed COVID-19 first and second wave before the coup with the lowest mortality in Southeast Asia region. The democratic government managed to secure 35 million doses of COVISHIELD vaccines before the coup and the first roll out plan started a week before the coup.

We feel very bad and sad. We were very much worried about COVID. We knew that there will be a big problem and big third wave. After the coup, the vaccine rolls out plan and the vaccine delivery plan of Democratic Government were disintegrated and distorted by military junta.

Regular healthcare services are unlikely to be restored as the military continues to harass and arrest healthcare workers and medical staff, and they vandalize medical supplies, equipment, and ambulances. Repression has been particularly brutal against health workers doing CDM. So far, more than 210 health workers were arrested, 40 were injured and at least 29 were killed. All of this was happening at the time of the third COVID wave in July this year.

Since COVID was detected in the country 18,500 deaths have been ascertained as COVID. This number is highly underestimated, and underreported, 3 or 4 times less as

the military had no capacity to manage the third wave. They even blocked the oxygen cylinders and medical supplies for the patients.

Now, we are very worried and very much concerned for COVID-19 fourth wave, in the face of the military lifting all social distancing measures, opening public spaces such as pagodas and entertainment facilities. They like to show they can control the country, actually not, when the overall vaccination coverage is around only 7%.

We have formed National level COVID-19 Prevention, Control and Management Commission in NUG and COVID-19 Task Force by all the EHOs in Myanmar. We are united. We have been working together very closely. We have made a policy based on three fundamental principles of;

(a) People first,

(b) Transparency

(c) Equality, Impartiality and Equibalanced Communication among all parties

Since April, we have constantly engaged with the UN agencies, GAVI, and many donor organisations, highlighting the urgent need of COVID-19 vaccination as a humanitarian needs and vaccination to be carried out by the independent UN agencies in urban areas to improve the public safety and engagement and also to deliver the vaccines through border crossing to the ethnic armed organisation-controlled areas.

Unfortunately, six months have already gone by and none of the vaccines from GAVI has been delivered to Myanmar through the border nor the Yangon International airport when the risk of further waves of the pandemic is imminent. Therefore, I urge all international partners

(1) To act swiftly and effectively

(2) To negotiate with China, Thailand and India, Chinese, Thailand and Indian governments to bring all the necessary vaccines through the cross border where the risk of the fourth wave is significantly high due to their geographic locations

(3) To maintain Myanmar crisis as an international agenda for providing the much-needed humanitarian and COVID related matters.

The root cause of Myanmar Crisis is because of Military coup, Brutal Military Junta. Myanmar's crisis is not just Myanmar's affairs, it has major impact on the geopolitics, region's economy, stability and most importantly on the COVID. No one is safe unless everyone is safe.

So, please save Myanmar. I would like to make an earnest request to Internationals, EU and G20, Please Save Myanmar Right Now. Thank you so much.