“There’s been no trace of threats. The villagers I’ve met did not seem to have any fear so that’s what we saw.” : H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai

“I just like to say one thing if I may. You’ve probably heard the news that former Governor Bill Richardson is no longer with the advisory board. We came with open minds and we speak with one voice to the implementation committee headed by the Minister for Social Welfare. So we expect to come up with recommendations and advice in the next 2-3 months. Well I have seen the Chinese assistance for the building materials for the offices of the immigration, foreign ministry and security including part of the housing so I think that is to be commended. I think China can play a key role in helping with the repatriation in providing the housing materials to be built and I understand China has been working closely with the Union Enterprise on this. I think what the returnees need most of all is security. We have seen security provided in 4,5 villages that we have visited. Secondly the returnees will need a proper place to live and there should be full medical facilities adequately for them to stay temporarily then to be resettled in the villages they are from. They have given us the evidence of the preparations for food to be provided, electricity in the transit camps, health services and things like that. Also inspected the storage for food and how it could be transported. The place was already provided with electricity by the Myanmar government. I encourage the Myanmar government to continue to provide this kind of media access. I think we’ve had about 20 of us altogether seeing this with our own eyes. The place was already provided with electricity by the Myanmar government. We don’t intend to be the cheerleader of the government or the lead cheerleader of the international community. We are not the mouthpiece of the Myanmar government or the international community. We are independent, impartial and you have seen that the international advisors and Myanmar advisors are people of great dignity. We have our credibility and a lot of social capital and we have been working in the area of peace and development for a long, long time. My personal view is that the local government has to be more involved. I think the process has to be more inclusive and I would urge the local parliamentarians in Rakhine State to be consultants. I think the entire consultation process has to begin from the community level before going all the way up to the National Government level.

The implementation of Kofi Anan’s 88 points cannot be done top-down only or bottom-up only; it has to be under the process of constant consultation from the communities to the executive branch, legislative branch of the State and National government. Of course, the international community can be included in the consultation process and I think that’s how the peace, development and harmony can be sustainable.—Myanmar News Agency

H.E. Prof. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai meets people from Muslim Community during his visit to Maungtaw. PHOTO: MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY