



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. EMBASSY RANGOON

110 University Avenue, Kamayut Township, Rangoon, Burma

For Immediate Release

Myitkyina, October 27, 2014- Ambassador Derek Mitchell visited Myitkyina, Kachin State October 25-27. This was Ambassador Mitchell's third visit to Kachin State as Ambassador; his first visit was in December 2012 and his second visit was in October 2013. During his three day visit, Ambassador Mitchell met with more than 150 members of Kachin society, including religious leaders, local humanitarian workers, cultural historians, students, NGO leaders, political party representatives, peace process actors, and government officials, including Chief Minister Lajon Ngan Seng, to increase his understanding about the current political, military, and humanitarian situation in the state. Ambassador Mitchell was joined by his wife Min; this was Mrs. Mitchell's first visit to Kachin State.

Ambassador and Mrs. Mitchell began their trip by visiting Ja Maing Kaung and Tal Kone IDP camps, where they talked to camp residents about their situation. The conditions experienced in these camps are a small indication of the continued suffering of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and citizens elsewhere in Kachin State. While IDPs expressed a profound desire to return home, they cautioned that such returns should occur only through proper mechanisms that ensure their safety, security, and access to basic services. Indeed, any resettlement must be voluntary, transparent, dignified, safe, and sustainable in consultation with all affected stakeholders to conform to international standards.

Overall, Ambassador Mitchell heard two fundamental points consistently in all conversations with Kachin representatives: a universal desire for peace; and a deep reservoir of mistrust toward central authority more than three years after the breach of the 1994 ceasefire that has led to an increased military presence in the state, particularly in close proximity to civilian areas.

Ambassador Mitchell underscored the United States' deep concern about the increase in tension in Hpakant Township. Actions that further risk the lives and well-being of the Kachin people will only increase suffering, deepen mistrust, and undermine confidence in the peace process. Only through dialogue can differences be overcome, the violence cease, care and protection be given to IDPs and civilians, and the groundwork for genuine and lasting peace, stability, and development be forged in Kachin State, and the country as a whole.

Since 2011, the United States has supported humanitarian response efforts—including agriculture and food security interventions, shelter and settlements support, and water, sanitation, and hygiene activities—for conflict-affected populations in Kachin and Shan States. Recently, the United States provided \$500,000 to the NGO Metta Development Foundation to assist more than 24,000 beneficiaries in Kachin through IDP camp shelter construction or repair, water system improvements, hygiene promotion campaigns, and agricultural skills training on soil fertility management and seed selection.

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