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STATEMENT ON THE SENTENCING OF TWO REUTERS JOURNALISTS, WA LONE AND KYAW SOE OO IN MYANMAR

When I met with Myanmar's State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Nay Pyi Taw on 8 April 2019, I emphasised to her my support for Myanmar's democratisation efforts. I was assured of her commitment in this regard.

We also had discussions on the issue of the Rohingyas. Clearly, our opinions diverged. It would be recalled that since the new Pakatan Harapan Government took office, Malaysia has continued our efforts to ensure that the world is seized of the Rohingya issue, which is the great humanitarian tragedy in Southeast Asia in recent times. Clearly, this effort requires the involvement of the media.

Myanmar fully knows that freedom of expression is a requisite for any successful democracy.

On the part of Malaysia, we strive to continually improve freedom of the press in the country. In September 2018, Malaysia co-sponsored a United Nations Human Rights Council resolution 39/6 entitled "The safety of journalist", which urges State authorities to refrain from intimidating or threatening the media, as well as condemning measures that intentionally prevent or disrupt access to or dissemination of information online and offline. Malaysia will continue to guarantee the freedom of opinion and expression of the media.

As a friend in ASEAN, Malaysia hopes that the Government of Myanmar will spare no effort to improve the safety of journalists and press freedom in the country. Malaysia is willing to assist Myanmar in its democracy and economic reforms as well as to find a just solution towards the Rohingya Situation in Rakhine State.

PUTRAJAYA

24 April 2019