



GoSL Statement made by H.E. Himalee Arunatilaka, the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva

**54th Session of the Human Rights Council:
Report on Sri Lanka by the High Commissioner for Human Rights
pursuant to HRC Resolution 51/1
11 September 2023**

Mr. President,

At the outset, let me reiterate that the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) has consistently rejected Resolution 46/1 and 51/1 that led to the setting up of the so-called 'Accountability Project'. We also reject the written update, its conclusions and recommendations.

We recall that the majority of the Member States either opposed or abstained from voting on these Resolutions, in fundamental disagreement with its unacceptable content in particular the so-called evidence gathering mechanism, the establishment of which is unprecedented. We reiterate that it goes beyond the mandate that Member States conferred on the Council by UNGA Resolution 60/251.

Mr. President,

These Resolutions are intrusive and polarising. It is upheld only by a handful of countries for reasons unrelated to human rights, and based on their vote bank domestic politics.

Many countries have already raised serious concerns on the budgetary implications of this Resolution given its dubious mandate. Sri Lanka has repeatedly pointed out that this is an unproductive and unhelpful drain on the resources of the Council and its Members. For all the reasons stated above, Sri Lanka will not cooperate with it.

However, as an active participant of the multilateral framework and in keeping with our close engagement with the international community and the Council in other areas of its work, Sri Lanka will continue to engage constructively with other mechanisms of the Council that have been productive and beneficial to our people such as the UPR process.

Mr. President,

The content of the written update does not reflect the actual ground situation in Sri Lanka.

The economic, social and financial stabilization that Sri Lanka has achieved in the past year has been appreciated and acknowledged domestically and externally. Those who are mandated and has the expertise to deal with economic and financial reforms remain confident in the country's prospects.

It is regrettable that the OHCHR has also chosen to ignore the democratic resilience of the country and its institutions demonstrated in the past year.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka reiterates its deep concerns regarding the ever-increasing mandate of the OHCHR in making sweeping and intrusive comments on all aspects of economic, financial, electoral, political, domestic, budgetary and development policies. We strongly object to the written update pronouncing on policy matters that are essentially domestic for any sovereign country and outside the framework of this Council, which is unhelpful.

In its simplistic analysis, the OHCHR also refers to the challenges Sri Lanka is currently facing in the food, health and nutrition and education sectors as if it is an isolated phenomenon affecting Sri Lanka alone. In parallel in New York, the UN Secretary General, in solidarity with developing Member States in debt and financial distress arising from the current global context, is highlighting sympathetically the severe setbacks and challenges encountered by all developing countries in achieving the SDGs.

Sri Lanka rejects all Conclusions and Recommendations including references to targeted sanctions as they are based on incorrect and unsubstantiated sources contravening the principles of natural justice and the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka remains firmly committed to pursuing tangible progress on human rights through our domestic institutions and have made significant progress as follows:

- **H.E the President in a statement the Parliament** on 09 August 2023 outlined the Government's vision and the progress made in reconciliation efforts undertaken inter alia in legislative reforms, institutional activities, addressing land issues, resettlement of IDPs, North- East Development Plan, and 13th Amendment. **All Party Conferences** have been convened to consolidate political support for these reconciliation efforts.
- The **Anti-Corruption Act No. 09 of 2023** passed by the Parliament has strengthened the financial and functional independence of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery and Corruption.
- Deliberations continue on the draft **Anti-Terrorism Bill**, while remaining committed to having the draft law in line with international standards.
- Tangible progress has been made by **independent domestic mechanisms** inter alia, the Office on Missing Persons (OMP), Office for Reparations (OR), and Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR), details of which have been provided in our written observations to the Report.

- The **Interim Secretariat of the of the Truth and Reconciliation Mechanism** is established. The proposed truth-seeking mechanism has been identified as a meaningful way to secure the peace achieved after three decades of brutal conflict. Consultations are ongoing with stakeholders including the civil society on the proposed mechanism.
- The **Office for Overseas Sri Lankan Affairs** functions as the central point for the Government's engagement with overseas Sri Lankans promoting reconciliation through dialogue and understanding.

Mr. President,

We have provided our observations in detail with regard to this written update, which intends to cover grave distortions in the written update of the OHCHR and its misrepresentation of the current ground situation in Sri Lanka. We request that this response be given equal visibility as the OHCHR report.

Notwithstanding our position on the HRC Resolution, as a responsible member of the international community, Sri Lanka will continue to engage constructively with the UN and its agencies, in keeping with domestic priorities and policies as well as the international obligations voluntarily undertaken.

I would like to end by conveying Sri Lanka's sympathies with the People of Morocco at this difficult time.

Thank you.