



**GoSL Statement**  
**53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council:**  
**Oral update on Sri Lanka**  
**by the High Commissioner for Human Rights pursuant to**  
**HRC resolution 51/1 (21 June 2023)**

Mr. President,

The Government of Sri Lanka is addressing the unprecedented social and economic issues arising from the economic crisis. Political stability has been restored while conditions on the ground have improved considerably for the people. In parallel and despite ongoing fiscal challenges, the Government is continuing its focus on the long-term measures towards reconciliation and accountability within the framework of the Constitution.

The GoSL has been successful in maintaining economic stabilization. The IMF Extended Fund Facility for Sri Lanka was approved recently, and the necessary fiscal, monetary and governance reforms are underway. Social protection measures to mitigate the impact on the poor and vulnerable have also been introduced. The availability of essential items including fertilizer, fuel, medicine and energy has been restored and headline inflation has decreased.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka has always remained open for dialogue and constructive engagement with its international partners on human rights and reconciliation. The Government is determined to safeguard peace and harmony amongst all communities and enforce the rule of law, while respecting the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, and in keeping with our international obligations.

Allow me therefore, to update this Council on recent developments in my country in this regard:

- Hon. President convened a meeting on 08 June to discuss and review the progress in legislative reforms, institutional activities, land issues, release of prisoners and power decentralization as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, National Land Council and the Office on Missing persons.
- The Government is engaging in further consultations with all stakeholders on the draft **Anti-Terrorism Bill** and receiving views to ensure that it is in compliance with international standards while catering to domestic needs.
- The **Anti-Corruption Bill** which was gazetted in April aims at further strengthening the activities of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery and Corruption, towards its functional independence and impartiality. This Bill was challenged in the

Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has given its determination, and the Bill was taken up in Parliament for the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading today 21<sup>st</sup> June.

- In March this year, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Justice undertook a working visit to South Africa, for a preliminary study of their experience on truth and reconciliation. The concept of a mechanism that would suit Sri Lanka, has received Cabinet approval and an advisory committee has been appointed to hold discussions with all stakeholders and facilitate drafting of the required legislation. On 29 May 2023, Cabinet approval was granted to authorize the Secretary to the President to establish and operate an Interim Secretariat of the Truth and Reconciliation Mechanism and direct the Secretary to the Treasury to provide necessary financial allocations. A Director General has been appointed to lead the Interim Secretariat and will commence its work shortly.
- As of May 2023, the **Office on Missing Persons (OMP)** has concluded preliminary inquiries on 3170 complaints as part of its verification process leading to in-depth investigations. The President has emphasized the need for enhanced operations of the Office on Missing Persons, including through digitization efforts and speeding up the issuance process of Certificates of Absence (CoA) for individuals previously reported as missing, which is an interim measure. As of June 2023, 1,283 families have been assisted in getting CoAs while the validity of their provisions was extended by another two years from 2021 to 2023. the OMP has developed the Strategic Road Map – 2023-2025 which covers eight focus areas including the preliminary inquiries to be conducted, digitalization process, victim and family support, tracing, and further investigations.
- The budget for the **Office for Reparations (OR)** in 2022 was Rs 815 million, of which 87% of the total recurrent expenditure went to pay compensation. Rs 405.3 million was disbursed covering 2402 cases related to death and injuries, missing persons and damaged properties due to conflict in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. A special allocation of Rs 10 million was made in February 2023 for expediting the grant of compensation to victims and families in Jaffna.
- **The Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR)** continues its reconciliation work and provides opportunities through its conflict transformation programme for interfaith and intercultural dialogue among the reconciliation committees established at the grassroots level with the inclusion of clergy, women's groups, youth, government officials and civil society leaders. ONUR is in the process of developing a National Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism. Collaborating with UNESCO, ONUR has provided online Training on PVE to over 300 youths across the country, and is combining a Small Grants Program assisting grassroots level initiatives.
- The **Presidential Commission of Inquiry** to appraise the findings of earlier Commissions submitted a synopsis of the recommendations in the draft final report

to the President on 6 February this year, pending finalization of the report. The synopsis outlines an executive summary of about 27 recommendations, and refers to the need for closure and the way forward inclusive of a people and victim centred strategy to resolve the post conflict issues.

- By the beginning of this year, 92% of the private lands in the Northern and Eastern Provinces that had been retained by the military had been released to the legitimate civilian owners. An additional 100 acres in Palaly in the Northern Province were released on 3<sup>rd</sup> February. Action has also been initiated to restore land ownership of people who had been traditionally occupying and cultivating their lands, but which were declared as forest or wildlife reservations after they were abandoned due to the conflict. A roadmap to remap such areas and grant deeds has been approved by the Cabinet of Ministers.
- Further, the Government has continued with the resettlement process and has established a special unit under the Presidential Secretariat with the objective of resolving the prolonged issues of the people of the Northern and Eastern Provinces and restore the normalcy with improved living conditions of the remaining IDPs who are at welfare centres.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka has reiterated its categoric rejection of the external evidence gathering mechanism established following Resolution 46/1, which will have wide-ranging legal and political implications for all countries.

Notwithstanding its position on the HRC Resolution 51/1 and despite the severe constraints, Sri Lanka actively and constructively engaged with the regular Human Rights mechanisms, including the UPR Review under the 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle and the ICCPR Review in February and March this year respectively. The Government has taken note of the constructive comments and recommendations made during these Reviews.

Let me conclude by reiterating Sri Lanka's continued cooperation and constructive engagement with this Council and the United Nations, in keeping with our Constitution and our international obligations voluntarily undertaken.

Thank you.

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