



**58th Session of the Human Rights Council:
Statement by PR/Geneva**

(as the country concerned following the Oral Update on Sri Lanka
by the High Commissioner for Human Rights)

03 March 2025

Mr. President,

Pursuant to the model conduct of a free, fair and peaceful election followed by a dignified transition in keeping with our decades of democratic practice, H.E. Anura Kumara Dissanayake was sworn in as the 9th Executive President of Sri Lanka in September last year, followed by the election of a new Parliament in November 2024, enabling the Government to move forward with a strengthened mandate to deliver on the people's expectations for a new political culture and economic and social development in Sri Lanka.

The Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, in his address to this Council last week, highlighted that Sri Lanka has embarked on a new path, with a government built through the collective will of the people from the North, East, West and South of the country. He highlighted the Government's commitment towards a unified Sri Lankan nation that respects diversity, and works towards removing all divisions based on race, religion, class and caste, and not allow a resurgence of racism or religious extremism in our country.

The Government has prioritized economic growth which will take place in a manner that is inclusive, where all citizens have enhanced economic opportunities allowing the resultant benefits to be reaped fairly by all strata of society. The rule of law, transparency, accountability and reconciliation will prevail in order to ensure sustained economic growth and social well-being of the people

The Government has committed to:

- protect democracy and human rights of all citizens including addressing past issues
- ensure the related domestic processes to be credible and independent within the Constitutional framework..
- And, to examine carefully and expand the work of the proposed truth and reconciliation commission, to investigate acts of violence caused by racism and religious extremism

Economic priorities of the Government include eradicating rural poverty, implementing the "Clean Sri Lanka" initiative to promote social, environmental, and ethical revival, and establishing a robust digital economy to foster innovation and sustainable growth. The Government is committed to ensuring assistance to all citizens affected by the conflict in consonance with its pledge to achieve sustainable peace, reconciliation and development in the conflict affected areas of the country.

Mr. President,

The work of the **Office on Missing Persons (OMP)**, about which we have been **updating this Council regularly**, continues, with enhanced public trust and functional and financial independence. The OMP regional offices also receive complaints directly from the people. The OMP is collaborating with national, bilateral and international partners including the ICRC and UN agencies as well as local CSOs. Through a national level steering committee, the OMP is working with government agencies. It also has a separate national CSO forum which functions at national as well as district level under Government Agents.

The work of the **Office for Reparations** goes beyond monetary compensation to include livelihood and psychosocial support as collective reparation initiatives. The OR is a comprehensive reparations scheme anchored in the rights of all Sri Lankans and functions as an effective remedy to contribute to the promotion of reconciliation for the wellbeing, and security of all Sri Lankans.

Following its establishment as an independent institution by Parliamentary Act of January 2024, the **Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR)**, has been further strengthened. The ONUR conducts training programs to promote social cohesion, religious coexistence and conflict transformation workshops providing opportunities for interfaith and intercultural dialogue particularly among the youth. Reconciliation committees established at grass root level comprising clergy, women's groups, youth groups, government officials and civil society leaders are also involved in these activities. These committees have been established and are functioning in all grama niladhari divisions, which is the lowest level of local administration.

Mr. President,

We remain steadfast in our belief that national ownership with gradual reforms, is the only practical way forward to transformative change. We regret the continuing inconsistent application of human rights principles through the work of the Council. This has resulted in the erosion of trust in the human rights architecture making countries less likely to respect the noble purposes for which the Human Rights Council was created.

Sri Lanka has consistently spoken out against country specific resolutions that do not have the concurrence of the country concerned. We have reiterated our **rejection of Resolutions 46/1, 51/1, and 57/1 and the external evidence gathering mechanism** on Sri Lanka that has been set up using these divisive and intrusive resolutions.

The external evidence gathering mechanism on Sri Lanka within the OHCHR is an unprecedented and ad hoc expansion of the Council's mandate, and contradicts its founding principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. No sovereign state can accept the superimposition of an external mechanism that runs contrary to its Constitution and which pre-judges the commitment of its domestic legal processes.

Furthermore, serious concerns have been raised by a number of countries on the budgetary implications of this external mechanism, particularly at a time the UN is undergoing severe budgetary constraints.

As reaffirmed at previous sessions, the Government of Sri Lanka is determined to deal with human rights challenges including reconciliation through domestic processes. Sri Lanka will also continue its constructive engagement with the Human Rights Council and regular human rights instruments in a spirit of cooperation and constructive dialogue, as was done most recently when Sri Lanka actively and constructively engaged with the CEDAW committee for the review of our 9th periodic report.

Sri Lanka reiterates its commitment to multilateral cooperation in pursuit of peace, prosperity, and sustainability along with the promotion and protection of all human rights.

Thank you.
