



Statement by the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

27th Session of the Human Rights Council

Agenda Item 3

Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka congratulates Ms. Rosa Kornfeld – Matte on her appointment as the First Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, and thank her for the report (A/HRC/27/46).

Sri Lanka as a country with a projected high rates of ageing population in South Asia, takes note of the preliminary considerations of the Independent Expert and wishes to inform that many of the observations made therein are already taken as priorities of the Government of Sri Lanka.

Mr. President,

The family centric society of Sri Lanka, has traditionally ensured the rights of older persons. Additionally, in order to meet the challenges faced by families and the communities of a fast developing society, the Government of Sri Lanka has also undertaken a number of steps to improve welfare, and safeguard dignity and the rights of the older persons.

In recognition of such efforts, Sri Lanka has been recognised by the Global Agewatch Index -2013, as one of the best countries in Asia where senior citizens have the highest quality of life.

Mr President,

Sri Lanka reaffirms its continuous commitment to ensure the rights of our elderly community through various initiatives some of which are outlined below:

- The Government, under the Protection of Elders Rights Act No. 9 of 2000, set up the National Council for Elders and the National Secretariat for Elders, which carries out various programmes to ensures the rights of older persons bringing about freedom, dignity, protection, self-achievement, and participation.
- The National Secretariat for Elders, through its elder's communities, established at rural, regional, district and provincial levels, creates an elders-friendly environment by promoting mutual support and collective participation among elders to improve their overall quality of life.
- It further provides direct support to 825 such rural elders committees by transferring minimal seed funds, and have also recruited Elders Rights Protection Officers to Divisional Secretaries to facilitate networking among these Committees.

- The “Elder Day Centre” initiative of the Government has facilitated the regular interaction and exchange of ideas among older persons of ethnically mixed Elders Committees, providing opportunities for social coherence. The initiative also facilitates organising a range of common activities, including, among others, income – generating activities, welfare programmes and recreational events.
- Identity Cards to senior citizens have been issued through Government mobile services, so that they may enjoy priority access for services at public and private institutions, including discounts on medication purchased from state outlets, higher interest rates for fixed deposits in Banks, etc.
- Further, noting that the older persons are also vulnerable to the risk of poverty in old age, Sri Lanka has implemented several social protection and security programmes, such as Public Sector Pension Scheme, Public Service Providers Fund, and pension schemes to assist older people. Needy older persons in Sri Lanka can also benefit from the Government safety net programme – known as Samurdhi Welfare – and the Public Assistance Programme, under which 255, 655 Sri Lankan citizens aged over 70 years are benefitted currently.

In conclusion, Mr President,

Sri Lanka reiterates its full commitment to address the increasing challenges of the ageing population, and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to uphold the rights, dignity and the wellbeing of the older persons.

We wish the new Independent Expert a successful tenure and extend our full cooperation in executing her mandate.

I thank you.