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Minister Samarasinghe appreciates support expressed for Sri Lanka at the UPR

Minister of Plantation Industries and Special Envoy of the President on Human Rights Mahinda Samarasinghe addressing the concluding session of Sri Lanka's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group in Geneva on Monday (5 November 2012), appreciated the interest shown by the 98 countries that made interventions during the Review on 1 November 2012. Referring to the outcome document adopted which summarized the comments made by the participating countries (attached below), Minister Samarasinghe said most speakers had commended the progress made by Sri Lanka in the short time since the end of the separatist conflict, while others who registered concerns, had also acknowledged the positive developments in the country.

As part of the regular UPR process, recommendations were made by most countries, of which Sri Lanka accepted 111. Minister Samarasinghe noted that with respect to a number of recommendations that did not enjoy Sri Lanka's support, its position was conveyed in a responsible, forthright and respectful manner.

Minister Samarasinghe thanked the Member and Observer States of the Human Rights Council for their active contribution to the Sri Lanka UPR, the President of the Council and the Council Secretariat for their respective roles in facilitating the Review, as well as the Troika of Rapporteurs coordinated by Spain and which included Benin and India.

Sri Lankan Mission
Geneva

5 November 2012

The summary of interventions made by States during the interactive dialogue of the Sri Lanka UPR which forms part of the formal UPR Report.

Thailand recognised Sri Lankan efforts to address alleged human rights violations, especially enforced disappearance and its establishment of an inter-ministerial working group. It appreciated steps taken to ensure physical safety and dignity of individuals, including elimination of all forms of ill-treatment or torture. It made recommendations.

Timor Leste commended Sri Lanka for launching the Human Rights Action Plan and welcomed Sri Lanka's openness in cooperating with UN Human Rights Mechanisms, in particular the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. It made recommendations.

Tunisia encouraged Sri Lanka to step up its efforts in fighting against all acts of torture and ill-treatment, against poverty and to ensure the prosperity of all its citizens. It made recommendations.

Turkey welcomed the efforts of Sri Lanka to consolidate the hard won peace following the defeat of terrorism and noted the holding of elections in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province. It appreciated Sri Lanka's efforts to resettle the many IDPs and its implementation of a programme to resolve land disputes. It made recommendations.

Uganda highlighted the Sri Lankan Government's commitment to addressing LLRC recommendations. It noted the OHCHR team visit to Sri Lanka at the latter's invitation. It made a recommendation.

Ukraine noted the positive developments in Sri Lanka since 2008 and encouraged it in successful implementation of the National Plan of Action in all its thematic areas. It made a recommendation.

United Arab Emirates noted that three decades of devastating conflict had been overcome by Sri Lanka's efforts. It asked what measures Sri Lanka has taken to ensure return of displaced persons.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland welcomed progress in normalising conditions in Sri Lanka and supported swift implementation of LLRC recommendations. It was concerned about attacks on and intimidation of journalists, human rights defenders and legal professionals. It made recommendations.

Australia welcomed Sri Lanka's commitment to protect human rights and agreed that it is now important for Sri Lanka to achieve measurable, concrete improvements as a result of implementing the NAPHR and the LLRC Action Plan. It made recommendations.

Uruguay highlighted Sri Lanka's establishment of the LLRC, its adoption of its NAPHR and its efforts to combat impunity and prevent international crime. It made recommendations.

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) welcomed Sri Lanka's implementation of the Charter on Women and its establishment of the NAPHR. It made recommendations.

Viet Nam acknowledged Sri Lanka's efforts in achieving normality and noted that progress now depended on Sri Lanka's systematic, concrete measures in implementing its NAPHR and its engagements with the international community.

Zimbabwe applauded Sri Lanka's engagement and dialogue with UN Human Rights mechanisms. It referred to Sri Lanka's 2011 invitation to the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It made recommendations.

Algeria commended Sri Lanka's engagement in the UPR process and its efforts to achieve and mainstream MDGs. It noted that the Constitution contained provisions to promote advancement of vulnerable social groups. It made recommendations.

Angola commended the Sri Lankan Government's decision to establish a NAPHR. It made recommendations.

Argentina commended Sri Lanka for adopting the National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. It made recommendations.

The United States of America stated that it has provided full comments in writing on its websites. It made recommendations.

Austria acknowledged the adoption of the NHRAP and the LLRC recommendations. Austria requested Sri Lanka to respond to allegations concerning limitations to freedom of assembly and expression and to reports of rape and sexual assault by security forces on Tamil women. It made recommendations.

Azerbaijan noted that Sri Lanka has integrated MDGs into its national development agenda. It asked whether it is considering the adoption of conventions on the refugee protection. It welcomed IDP's resettlement measures. It made recommendations.

Bahrain commended the Government's efforts to strengthen women's rights, its amendments to the penal code for sexual assault and its international cooperation to stop trafficking in persons. It made recommendations.

Bangladesh called upon the international community to provide assistance and cooperation to Sri Lanka's efforts towards domestic reconciliation solutions based on equity, inclusiveness and its specificities. It made recommendations.

Belarus regretted the unbalanced nature of the information prepared for the UPR by the OHCHR and the Special Procedures' on Sri Lanka, which had reaffirmed its openness to re-engage in dialogue by issuing an official invitation to the OHCHR.

Belgium congratulated positive actions taken by Sri Lanka for displaced persons and adoption of the LLRC report and its plan of action but raised concerns about forced disappearances. It made recommendations.

Benin commended Sri Lanka on its measures on protecting the rights of children and IDPs including the return of the latter's possessions in compliance with relevant international regulations. It made recommendations.

Bhutan appreciated measures taken on human rights and fundamental freedoms of its citizens and commended the NAPHR. It hoped the international community will extend its full cooperation and support. It made a recommendation.

Bolivia (Plurinational State of) recognised that Sri Lanka is on the verge of achieving MDG 6, which includes among others eradicating extreme poverty, universal primary education and gender equality. It made a recommendation.

Botswana asked the Government how it intended to respond to alleged violations of humanitarian and human rights law and to serious concerns, including from the UN Secretary General, of abuse and harassment of human rights defenders. It made a recommendation.

Brazil commended Sri Lanka for its IDP resettlement and de-mining programmes and welcomed the National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and for implementation of the LLRC. It made recommendations.

Brunei Darussalam congratulated Sri Lanka on its commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. It welcomed Sri Lanka's efforts to combat poverty, achieve MDGs and uphold the rights of children and persons with disabilities.

Burkina Faso noted Sri Lanka's establishment of the LLRC, constitutional and legislative reforms and the NAPHR, but that it has not yet ratified a number of international instruments. It made recommendations.

Cambodia recognised Sri Lanka's efforts to address all challenges, especially its legislative, institutional steps and measures towards national rehabilitation and development. It encouraged Sri Lanka to pursue its demining efforts, thereby enabling the return of IDPs to their origin. It made a recommendation.

Canada made recommendations.

Chile welcomed resettlement of about 300,000 IDPs and its efforts to tackle the issue of disappearances. It recognised Sri Lanka's commitment to investigating complaints of extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. It made recommendations.

China congratulated Sri Lanka for its socio-economic developments and national reconciliation, its establishment of national human rights instruments and its progress in resettling IDPs and combating poverty. It made a recommendation.

Congo noted Sri Lanka's advances since the 1st UPR, including implementation of LLRC recommendations, especially relating to demining, return of IDPs and educational reform. It congratulated Sri Lanka on efforts to reconstruct the North and East, re-launch its economy and reorganise civil administration.

Costa Rica commended Sri Lanka's willingness for dialogue. It understood that it is still in a process of transition, however, it was concerned about continued persecution of human rights defenders, discrimination of ethnic minorities and allegations of torture. It made recommendations.

Cuba congratulated Sri Lanka for implementing recommendations accepted in 2008, rehabilitating and re-integrating LTTE ex-combatants, not subjecting former child soldiers to judicial procedures and swiftly resettling IDPs. It made recommendations.

Cyprus acknowledged Sri Lanka's steps in the areas of development, poverty reduction, rehabilitation and reintegration of the NAPHR and its Task Force for implementing LLRC recommendations.

Czech Republic recognised the Sri Lankan Government's efforts and the remaining challenges in the processes of reconciliation and strengthening of the rule of law. It made recommendations.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea commended Sri Lanka for its achievements, including integration of MDGs into national development. It made recommendations.

Denmark appreciated the NHRAP and the LLRC Action Plan, and was concerned over reports of impunity for perpetrators of serious human rights violations in Sri Lanka, which has not yet implemented previously accepted UPR recommendations, including on extrajudicial killings and torture. It made recommendations.

Djibouti called upon the international community to accompany Sri Lanka in effectively implementing recommendations made during this interactive dialogue. It made recommendations.

Ecuador welcomed Sri Lanka's efforts to establish responsibilities for human rights violations and the inter-ministerial working group on cases of alleged disappearance. It made recommendations.

Egypt noted positive development in Sri Lanka after the end of hostilities. It welcomed the Government's decision to lift the state of emergency and implement LLRC recommendations. It made recommendations.

Estonia welcomed Sri Lanka's action plans for human rights and implemented recommendations of LLRC and its implementations to date. It underlined that all recommendations by the LLRC and past commissions of inquiry need to be fully implemented. It made recommendations.

Ethiopia welcomed the Sri Lankan Government's plan to implement LLRC recommendations and to translate the text into the two official languages. It asked the Government to explain the measures taken on implementing recommendations of the national reconciliation mechanism. It made recommendations.

Finland indicated that Sri Lanka has committed itself to complete drafting of a bill on IDP rights and was encouraged by positive steps taken in the return process of the IDPs, Finland noted the LLRC report. It was interested in hearing about measures taken to protect IDP rights. It made recommendations.

France recognised Sri Lanka's few advances in human rights, but remained concerned about the general internal situation. It recalled that 17 humanitarian workers were murdered in 2006: the most serious crime ever against NGO personnel. No legal action has been launched to date. It made recommendations.

Germany noted that Sri Lanka's national report was encouraging. It underlined the importance of independent judiciary and impeachment procedures to be conducted with diligence. It made recommendations.

The Holy See highlighted the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-cultural character of Sri Lanka. It appreciated Sri Lanka's human rights and peace accomplishments. It made recommendations.

India looked forward to speedy resolution of the residual issues in resettlement and rehabilitation. It called for credible investigations into allegations in the LLRC report. It noted the action plan for time-bound implementation of LLRC recommendations.

Indonesia was encouraged by Sri Lanka's human rights continued progress. It emphasised that continued transparency and engagement with the international community was essential to sustained progress. It made recommendations.

Iran (Islamic Republic of) commended Sri Lanka for considerable achievements in restoration of civil administration, infrastructure and economic development in the north and east of Sri Lanka affected by the internal conflict. It made recommendations.

Iraq praised measures taken to adopt the 5-year NHRAP and welcomed its accession to the majority of human rights instruments in particular the CRC. It welcomed the step taken to protect elderly and strengthening religious freedoms. Iraq made recommendations.

Ireland commended Sri Lanka on progress in implementing commitments made during 2008 UPR and urged that remaining detainees be tried or begin reintegration process. It expressed concern about the prevention against terrorism act. It urged full respect for the independence of the judiciary. Ireland made recommendations.

Italy recognised progress achieved by Sri Lanka, however, several human rights concerns still remain, such as forced disappearances and torture, etc. and asked Sri Lanka which policies and initiatives it envisages to address these challenges. Italy made recommendations.

Japan welcomed the NHRAP and the National Plan of Action to implement LLRC recommendations. It expressed hope that Sri Lanka would continue efforts to engage with the international community including a visit by the High Commissioner. Japan made recommendations.

Kazakhstan recognised Sri Lanka's implementation of Prevention of Domestic Violence Act and the establishment of the National Child Protection Authority to secure rights of women and children. It made recommendations.

Kenya commended ratification of seven core international human rights instruments. It asked what steps Sri Lanka was taking to address concerns on access to full enjoyment of religious freedom for certain religious minority groups. Kenya made a recommendation.

Kuwait commended the efforts to implement the NHRAP. It recognised the important developments in spite of 30 years of conflict and the stability brought to all segments of society, such as the resettlement of IDPs, clearing the land mines and achieving part of the MDGs. Kuwait made recommendations.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic congratulated Sri Lanka on integrating MDGs into their national development agenda. It noted accession to seven core human rights treaties and implementation of domestic legislation.

Latvia noted Sri Lanka's efforts to improve cooperation with the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, yet noted that a number of requests by mandate holders to visit Sri Lanka had not yet been accepted. It made recommendations.

Lebanon commended Sri Lanka on establishing the national action plan. It noted Sri Lanka's commitment to safeguarding human rights. It made a recommendation.

Malaysia expressed hope that Sri Lanka's claims of efforts to protect human rights were sincere. It called for genuine effort at reconciliation. It called for both communities to work out the problem without interference from outsiders. It made recommendations.

Maldives expressed understanding of the enormous challenges faced by Sri Lanka and the need for accountability for violations of human rights committed by all sides. It welcomed the NAPHR to implement LLRC recommendations. It made recommendations.

Mauritania welcomed measures to combat violence against women and children. It recognised the reconciliation process underway in Sri Lanka. It requested information on the difficulties encountered in this process and the progress made

Mexico took note of Sri Lanka's actions to address serious human rights violations. It highlighted the enormous challenges faced by Sri Lanka and recognised efforts made to improve the living standard of the Sri Lankan people. Mexico made recommendations.

Morocco acknowledged Sri Lanka's adoption of the NHRAP in line with the 1993 Vienna Conference. It requested further information on the objectives and the areas covered in the plan. It made recommendations.

Myanmar commended Sri Lanka for restoring peace, stability and harmony. It called for recognition by the international community of Sri Lanka's success in resettling IDPs and rehabilitating former combatants. It made recommendations.

Nepal noted Sri Lanka's socio-economic achievements and progress toward meeting MDGs. It welcomed the NHRAP and efforts to implement LLRC recommendations. It made recommendations.

The Netherlands found the situation in Sri Lanka changed from four years ago. It expressed belief that the Sri Lankan government could further normalise the situation by implementing the report from the LLRC. It made recommendations.

New Zealand raised concerns over lack of progress on human rights. It saw progress on women's rights but raised concern over remaining substantial challenges. It noted current moratorium on executions. It made recommendations.

Nicaragua recognised Sri Lanka's commitment to build the rule of law and strengthen democracy. It highlighted implementation of the NHRAP, adopted after a participatory process. It made a recommendation.

Nigeria acknowledged gains under the LLRC process and welcomed progress in the implementation of the NHRAP. It urged Sri Lanka to continue its reconciliation process.

Norway acknowledged noted Sri Lanka's 2008 pledge to investigate attacks on human rights defenders and expressed concern over lack of progress in this area. It raised concerns over the low number of elected women. It noted the importance of independent civilian institutions to ensure democracy. Norway made recommendations.

Oman noted the enormous efforts made at the national, regional and international levels with setting a plan of action to rehabilitate and reintegrate victims and ex-combatants. It made a recommendation.

Pakistan called upon recognition by the international community for Sri Lanka's 2009 victory against terrorism. It welcomed the National Action Plan and the Task Force to monitor its implementation of LLRC recommendations. Pakistan made a recommendation.

Palestine noted the accession to most international human rights instruments that protect child rights, and the constitutional protection to freedom of religion. It noted adoption of major measures to protect and promote women rights, and the protection of workers' rights. Palestine made a recommendation.

The Philippines noted the unfinished implementation of many of Sri Lanka's pledges during the 1st UPR. It welcomed its concern for the protection of migrant workers but noted that articles 76 and 77 of the ICRMW remain unaccepted. It made recommendations.

Poland acknowledged Sri Lanka's efforts but raised concerns about independence and integrity of the judiciary and reports of disappearances. It requested information on measures to ensure independence of the judiciary. Poland made recommendations.

Qatar noted the adoption of a plan of action for promotion of human rights. It highlighted efforts to bring about national reconciliation and rebuild damaged regions affected by the conflict. Qatar made recommendations.

The Republic of Korea acknowledged progress in the reconciliation process, including resettlement of IDPs, reintegration of former combatants, and reconstruction of social infrastructure. It made recommendations.

Romania acknowledged Sri Lanka's cooperation with the UN technical missions on human rights which visited Sri Lanka in September 2012. It asked what Sri Lanka's plans are for further ratification of several key human rights conventions and what are the current mechanisms to investigate and if necessary prosecute reported cases of human rights violations.

The Russian Federation noted Sri Lanka's active role in the Human Rights Council and the invitation extended to the High Commissioner to visit Sri Lanka. It expressed sympathy for Sri Lanka's difficulties in assuring human rights. Russia made a recommendation.

Rwanda welcomed specific measures taken by Sri Lanka to deal with post-conflict period. It appreciated establishment of the Task Force to monitor implementation of LLRC recommendations. It made a recommendation.

Saudi Arabia highlighted Sri Lanka's commitment to international human rights treaties and legislation to implement them in compliance with UN standards. It noted Sri Lanka's effort to improve living standards despite decades of conflict. It made recommendations.

Serbia recognised human rights challenges facing Sri Lanka. It saluted achievements including implementation of the National Plan of Action, rehabilitation of former child soldiers and others. It encouraged Sri Lanka to pursue confidence building in former conflict zones.

Singapore acknowledged Sri Lanka's efforts at national reconciliation and affirmed rule of law as the key to ensuring stability, social justice and equality. It recognised Sri Lanka's progress in improving the well-being of its people. It made recommendations.

Slovakia expressed its awareness of the vast human rights challenges faced by Sri Lanka due to decades-long civil conflict. Slovakia made recommendations.

Slovenia noted CEDAW's call for inclusion of a gender perspective in national Development Agenda and reports on attacks of human rights defenders. Slovenia made recommendations.

South Africa was encouraged by Sri Lanka's initial steps to address extreme poverty, achieve MDGs, elaborate a National Human Rights Action Plan, resettle IDPs and conduct demining. It raised the challenges associated with armed conflict and protecting children's rights. It made recommendations.

South Sudan acknowledged Sri Lanka's achievements in demining, integration of ex-combatants, resettlement of IDPs, education policy and achievement of MDGs in health and education. It commended post-conflict progress and made recommendations.

Spain applauded progress made in promoting and protecting human rights. It made recommendations.

Sudan noted challenges to human rights resulting from armed conflict, an experience shared by Sudan. It paid tribute to Sri Lanka's efforts to restore stability. Sudan noted the plan of action approved by the government last July to implement the recommendations of the LLRC. Sudan made recommendations.

Swaziland was encouraged by Sri Lanka's focus on development of the Northern Eastern provinces. It acknowledged the 2010 establishment of the LLRC as a human rights safety net to encourage dialogue and compromise. It made a recommendation.

Sweden noted the decrease in reports of enforced disappearances; however it noted questions by civil society organisations about the impartiality of the parties investigating enforced disappearances. It raised concern over the absence of criminal convictions related to recruitment of child soldiers. It made recommendations.

Switzerland noted lack of proper follow-up to reports from experts mandated by the UN Secretary General. It raised concerns over continued forced disappearances. It raised concerns over legitimate grievances of minorities and need for an inclusive dialogue. Switzerland made recommendations.

Syrian Arab Republic acknowledged Sri Lanka's rapid emergence from spiral of violence yet noted huge challenges remaining. It welcomed implementation of recommendations from the reconciliation commission in particular rehabilitation of former soldiers. It made a recommendation.