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Statement by Sri Lanka- Item 3
Clustered ID with SR on Violence against Women and SR on Extreme Poverty
12 June 2014

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka takes note of the report of the Special Rapporteur, Rashida Manjoo (A/HRC/26/38) and her observations with regard to the continuing challenges in the prevention of violence against women. We welcome the work carried out by the Special Rapporteur in line with her mandate.

Mr President,

Notwithstanding the lack of a specific legally binding instrument at the international level, States can take measures to combat violence against women. Sri Lanka has taken concrete steps to address the issue of violence against women, in line with its zero tolerance policy on gender based violence.

We believe that in national policy formulation to combat violence against women, it is necessary to focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women to enable them to fully enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms. In our national policy framework, we have consistently highlighted the importance of gender equality and taken measures to alleviate any existing gender gaps.

Under the “Strengthening Enforcement of Law, Access to Justice and Social Integration” Programme (SELAJSI), which is being implemented by the Government of Sri Lanka in close partnership with UNDP, the Ministry of Child Development and Women’s Affairs is in the process of formulating a National Action Plan on Sexual and Gender based Violence. National consultations with all districts of the country will provide information for this process. Under this programme, awareness programmes are conducted on Women’s Rights with reference to CEDAW, the Women’s Charter and the prevention of gender based violence at the divisional level.

Sri Lanka has also enacted the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2005) and taken several measures to improve its implementation. Adopting a multi-sectoral approach, training on prevention and management of gender based violence is also provided to Police Health Midwives and Primary Healthcare Workers comprising the first health service providers to women and families. The Ministry of Health in partnership with non-governmental organizations has developed hospital-based centres to provide medical assistance to those requiring attention for injuries suffered before referral to legal and psychosocial support.

The Government has established Women and Children’s Police Desks staffed with female police officers in police stations in the former theatres of conflict. Specially trained police officers function at such desks which provide an enabling and

protective environment for children, women and girls and their parents to report incidents of abuse and exploitation. Sexual and gender based violence help desks are also located in hospitals in the areas affected by the conflict.

Mr President,

We also take note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty, Maria Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona (A/HRC/26/28) which focuses on extreme poverty and human rights in terms of fiscal policy, and particularly taxation policies, as a major determinant in the enjoyment of human rights.

Sri Lanka is committed to enhance the support extended to vulnerable groups through various subsidy schemes. Existing income support programmes such as “Divi Neguma” (livelihood development) and “Gama Neguma” (village upliftment), have taken an inclusive growth based approach, with the provision of new means for livelihood development and improvement of infrastructure facilities at rural level. Numerous programmes have been implemented by the Government to improve the socioeconomic conditions of low income households. The Samurdhi Authority of Sri Lanka provides various benefits to low income households to uplift their living standards under livelihood development programmes. The total allocation for the Samurdhi subsidy programmes in 2013 was Rs. 14.2 billion with 1.5 million households benefited under these programmes. The Samurdhi Social Security Fund has also consistently helped reduce the vulnerability of the poor to exigencies such as death, hospitalisation and child births. Payments were made from this fund to 75,180 beneficiaries in 2013.

With the aim of further enhancing its initiatives with regard to poverty alleviation, the Government recently established the “Divi Neguma Development Department”, with the amalgamation of the Samurdhi Authority, Southern Development Authority and the Udarata Development Authority, providing micro-finance facilities and developing physical and social infrastructure and human capital to uplift the living standards and develop livelihoods of the people.

Owing to sustained initiatives Sri Lanka has made significant progress in social indicators and has comfortably surpassed many of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets set for 2015. Driven by improved socio-economic conditions the country has also experienced a gradual decline in the headcount poverty index from 8.9 in 2009/2010 to 6.5 in 2012. In the Human Development Index, Sri Lanka is ranked 92 among 187 countries.

Thank you.