

Statement by the Sri Lanka Delegation at the
ANNUAL FULL-DAY MEETING ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

*Rights of the child: Holistic approach for the protection and promotion of the rights of
children working and/or living on the street*

Mr. President,

At the outset, my delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the panelists, who have outlined key areas of concern towards identifying the root causes of the problem of street children and preventative measures that could be adopted.

Sri Lanka affords its highest priority for the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at national level, in a comprehensive manner based on ensuring the best interest of the child. In this regard, the end of a three decade long terrorist conflict has provided new opportunities for Sri Lanka to further accelerate the initiatives to continue to work towards their growth, development and protection. Concerted policies and initiatives adopted by the government since independence have resulted in a steady decline in the under-five child mortality and near universal school enrollment of children without gender discrimination. The provision of free health care and education, inclusive of free textbooks and uniforms, has continued throughout even ~~the~~ in the theatre of conflict. A number of initiatives continue for the protection of children from any form of abuse and exploitation. As a result, the problem of street children in Sri Lanka is minimal and is being addressed with a holistic approach, taking into account both the root causes and prevailing conditions with the objective of its total elimination.

Mr. President,

It has been observed that in urban areas the metropolis and other cities, the majority of street children do not live and work on the street on a permanent basis. Instead, most

of these children have a shelter and live along with their parents or relatives, and undertake casual income earning activities.

In order to minimize the related social-economic consequences of this phenomenon, in the best interest of the child, the Government has adopted strategies, including necessary legislative measures. These initiatives have ensured that street children continue to enjoy their right to education, while also providing for the rehabilitation of offenders and victims. Relevant legal measures have also been taken to deter the exploitation of children being deployed to gain economic benefits to their guardians. These children also benefit from vocational training in addition to regular schooling.

Mr. President,

The Department of Probation and Childcare Services is the primary government authority responsible for the welfare of these children. The Department also provides facilities to undertake the rehabilitation of street children who have been convicted or have become victims of crimes. In addition, it also facilitates the issuance of birth certificates for them as and when necessary. A number of local and international NGOs with the private sector have been supplementing State efforts in this regard.

In keeping with the safeguards enshrined in the Constitution towards the protection of children, the government continues to promote, with special care, the interests of children so as to ensure their full development, and to protect them from exploitation and discrimination.

Thank you.