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Statement of the delegation of Sri Lanka at the Panel Discussion on Maternal Mortality, Human Rights Council, 14 June 2010

Mr. President,

My delegation is pleased to join this panel discussion on Maternal Mortality, which we believe is a human rights issue of tremendous impact and utmost urgency.

As we did in March 2009, Sri Lanka is pleased to subscribe to the Joint Statement, which has been delivered today by Colombia, highlighting the importance of "addressing preventable maternal mortality and morbidity under a human rights perspective" due to unacceptably high number of women who die each year during or after pregnancy and childbirth or from reasons associated with childbirth. Therefore, we join others in our collective call to raise awareness on the human rights implications of this phenomenon, which affects both developing and developed countries. As we have reaffirmed in the joint Statement, greater commitment and political will are required by governments to successfully reduce women's deaths and disability related to pregnancy.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka has integrated the Millennium Development Goals into the national development agenda and is on track in reaching most of the indicators while some have been already achieved at the national level. Among the notable achievements are those relating to infant mortality and maternal mortality.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka's commitment to safe motherhood ensures that pregnant women have adequate care throughout the pregnancy and at delivery. Approximately 95% of pregnant women are registered with public health midwives appointed to local institutions, and approximately 98% of the total births come within the purview of institutional deliveries.

The proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel is around 98.5% and if the current trend continues, 100% coverage is expected to be achieved by 2015, thus surpassing the MDG target.

Mr. President,

According to the statistics at the Family Health Bureau of the Ministry of Health, the current maternal mortality rate is about 39.3 per 100,000 live births, and this is the lowest in South Asia. With near-universal access to health care, and 98% Institutional deliveries, Sri Lanka is on-course to meet the MDG on improving maternal health.

Mr. President,

Despite these achievements, we see no room for complacency. The Government will spare no effort to further strengthen the capacities for comprehensive routine reporting of births and deaths. We are also in the process of ameliorating the skills base for all aspects of the health information system. Preventing maternal mortality is one of the central goals of maternal and child health service. It is also necessary to improve service delivery for pregnant mothers, especially those in remote villages, plantations, and in the Northern and Eastern provinces, in order to improve their health and well-being.

Finally Mr. President, Sri Lanka reiterates its on going commitment to securing the rights of women in further addressing the issues related to maternal health.

Thank you.