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Statement by Sri Lanka- Item 3
Clustered ID with WG on Discrimination against women and
SR on right to education
16 June 2014

Mr. President,

My delegation thanks the Special Rapporteur on the right to Education for his comprehensive report (A/HRC/26/27) which focuses on the assessment of the educational attainments of students and the implementation of the right to education. We take note of the wide range of recommendations made in the report.

Sri Lanka's education policy and legislation is formulated to reach all children. It needs to be emphasised that Sri Lanka's success in maintaining high levels of literacy, achieving gender parity in primary, secondary and tertiary education and high enrolment rates at primary and secondary levels is due to its policies supporting access to basic education without discrimination, innovative strategies and interventions targeted to eliminate discrimination in education. Access to education is guaranteed to all ethnicities in the national language of choice be it Sinhala or Tamil in all parts of the country.

As of May 2014, all ex-child combatants have all been rehabilitated and reintegrated into society and are pursuing their education. Those who had missed out on their schooling during the conflict period were facilitated to gain formal education and special education programmes were conducted under the "Catch up Education Scheme" in order that those qualified could sit O/Level and A /Level exams. Of the ex-child combatants, 169 gained university entrance. Further, 322 ex-child combatants received vocational training in order to be gainfully employed.

We agree with the views of the SR that education is invaluable for the preservation of the cultural heritage of humankind. In this regard, the Government is implementing the LLRC recommendations that call for creation of greater awareness of linguistic and cultural affinities among communities through the translation and publishing of major literary works in the two languages, Sinhala and Tamil, and dissemination among school children and youth and through various cultural and social interactive programmes carried out by the Ministry of Culture & The Arts.

Inculcating in students a commitment to preserving and enriching multicultural and multilingual diversity is a first step in promoting better understanding among a country's different communities. Since the end of the conflict, the Government has launched a 10-year National Plan for a Trilingual Sri Lanka in January 2012 for the implementation of

the Trilingual Policy. The vision of this plan is to provide Sri Lankans the education, infrastructure and resources to acquire skills in Sinhala, Tamil and English languages to bring about integration and foster a society with mutual understanding and a sense of assimilation and belonging. Further, in line with LLRC recommendations, steps have been taken to incorporate Human Rights Education in the Secondary school education curricula.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka thanks the Working Group on the discrimination against women in law and in practice for its report. The recommendations under each theme outlined by the Working Group crystallize some very important tenets for the effective elimination of discrimination against women.

Sri Lanka has taken considerable measures to combat barriers to women's enjoyment of economic and social rights. In addition to the efforts taken to eliminate discriminatory laws, attitudinal changes that favour the position of women in society have been possible largely due to high levels of educational attainment and women being thereby recognised as equal partners and valuable contributors to the development process.

The Government has taken steps to address issues of women affected by the conflict in their contribution to the economic activities in the North and East. Single women households and war widows are especially catered to by legal aid and mediation mechanisms in the North and East. Special vocational and non-formal training programmes are being conducted for women who have not been able to continue with their formal education due to the protracted conflict, in order to initiate self-employment ventures or gain formal employment. Female ex-child combatants whose education was disrupted due to conflict have been given the opportunity to sit the GCE O/Level and A/Level exams and pursue tertiary education or have been provided vocational training to be gainfully employed. The Ministry of Child Development & Women's Empowerment and Care International have commenced a Special Development Programme mainly targeting widows and women-headed families in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu. Social empowerment of women is carried out through awareness programmes on cash management, reproductive health, alcohol abuse and prevention of Gender Based Violence.

Cognizant that economic and social empowerment of women has a direct bearing on a country's development, the Government continues to pay increased attention to women's issues, adopting a firm policy that seeks to empower women and address their concerns.

Thank you, Mr. President.