



Address by the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka

52nd Regular Session of the Human Rights Council

Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,

I take the floor in keeping with Sri Lanka's continuing policy of constructive engagement with the UN human rights instruments and mechanisms.

As we mark the 75th anniversary of the UDHR, and the 30th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA), we must resolve to preserve the spirit of multilateralism and the foundation of human rights governance. We must also strive to depoliticize human rights and find solutions to concerns through dialogue and multilateral cooperation rather than through confrontation, selectivity and unilateralism.

Mr. President,

We envisage 2023, the 75th anniversary of our independence, which coincides with the 75th Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration to be a year of socio-economic stabilization, reconciliation, and recovery.

The domestic institutions for reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka continue to carry out their work towards achieving important post-conflict recovery and healing.

A Cabinet Sub-Committee has been established under the Chairmanship of the President, to promote reconciliation among different communities and to address and resolve matters relating to issues encountered by the peoples of the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

The Committee has identified issues to be addressed expeditiously, including, developing a **truth-seeking mechanism**, drafting a new **counter-terrorism law**, establishing an **office for overseas Sri Lankans**, preparing a **Rapid Development Plan for the North and the East**, and addressing matters related in particular to **missing persons, resettlement and land**.

Discussions are in progress relating to a Truth-Seeking Mechanism within the framework of the Constitution while the contours of a model that would suit Sri Lanka are currently being assessed.

The 21st amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka, passed by Parliament in October 2022, provides for further strengthening of democratic governance, independent oversight of key institutions, the composition of the Constitutional Council and independent commissions.

A Cabinet appointed Sub-Committee is developing legislation on counterterrorism that balances national security concerns with international standards and best practices.

The Regulation of Election Expenditure Bill passed in Parliament in January 2023, envisages to vest the Elections Commission with the powers to monitor campaign expenditure.

The recent judgment of the Supreme Court on the Easter Sunday attack offers important insights into the independence of the judiciary.

Work is under way to operationalize an Office for Overseas Sri Lankan Affairs to facilitate more vigorous engagement with expatriate Sri Lankans encompassing all communities and generations.

In January 2023, the Sustainable Development Council issued guidelines to all Ministries to identify nationally appropriate SDG targets. The objective is to direct Government planning and resources towards SDGs amidst the economic challenges, and to ensure robust national level monitoring and progress evaluation.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka's economic vulnerability has increased in the face of global recession, conflict and turmoil. The Government has put in place several social protection measures for the most vulnerable segments of society with the assistance received from international partners.

Despite the current socio-economic challenges and constraints, our resolve to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of our people remains steadfast and determined.

Mr. President,

A series of unhelpful resolutions have been adopted by the HRC, the latest being resolution 51/1, without our consent as the country concerned. I reiterate Sri Lanka's position, which was stated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs last October, that we reject this resolution, which will extend and reinforce the so-called external evidence gathering mechanism on Sri Lanka established by the OHCHR in line with its own interpretation of Resolution 46/1. These resolutions are unhelpful to the people of my country, will polarize Sri Lankan society, and do not serve the objective of promoting reconciliation in Sri Lanka. We are of the view that this is an unproductive drain on the scarce resources of UN Member States which can be productively deployed elsewhere.

Mr. President,

Despite our opposition to country specific resolutions, as explained to this Council before, we remain open to discussion with the Council, Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies, and continue to believe in the value of constructive engagement.

It is in this constructive spirit, that Sri Lanka participated in the UPR Process last month, despite the difficult circumstances in the country. We consider the UPR to be an extremely important tool, enabling countries to mutually assess the progress of each other's human rights situation through engagement with peers in an atmosphere that is constructive and mutually respectful. Sri Lanka also looks forward to a meaningful dialogue when our 6th Periodic Report under the ICCPR is taken up for Review later this month.

I thank you, Mr. President.