Statement by Sri Lanka at HRC 40
Annual High-Level Panel Discussion on Human Rights Mainstreaming
'Human Rights in the Light of Multilateralism: Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward.

25 February 2019

Mr. President, Distinguished Panelists,
Excellences and delegates,

1. The Delegation of Sri Lanka wishes to thank the panelists for their insightful comments on the importance of integrating a human centric approach to all processes and outcomes in multilateral discourse. Multilateralism is a profound value that helps human endeavors cohere into processes and outcomes that benefit all, and should be fostered as integral to peace, security and development

2. This conversation comes at a time when there are broader concerns on whether the UN multilateral system is able to respond effectively to a rapidly changing global peace, security and development architecture. In a way, this conversation and the theme we address today position the future of humanity at its heart.

3. Having actively engaged in a number of inter-governmental processes and observing the overwhelming desire of the stakeholders to build consensus and collective outcomes over the last several years, particularly at the Paris Climate Change Summit, the Marrakech Global Migration Compact, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to name a few, we believe the picture is not entirely bleak. All these processes took a human centric approach integrating human rights and transforming them into actionable commitments. So, there is still hope that multilateralism can deliver despite the challenges it is faced with in recent times.

4. However, it is time to take a critical look on how and what more could be done to improve multilateral processes so that they could be; effective and timely in delivering responses; fair and objective in approach; enabling and equitable in impact or outcome. It is essential that the core principles and purposes enshrined in the UN Charter such as sovereign equality, non-discrimination and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms remains the guiding light in achieving international cooperation and addressing global socio-economic and cultural issues. It is in that spirit that we observe that all multilateral agreements have placed specific references on international cooperation and it is identified as a separate goal in the SDGs (Goal 17).

5. As many of contemporary issues that the world is grappling with being trans-boundary in nature, solutions to them also need to be global based on shared responsibility. Sharing experiences and best practices, exchanging technical knowledge has been a key area where international community has sought to engage with each other. The proposed 'Global Knowledge Hub', the 'start-up fund' and the 'Connection Hub'[1] of the Capacity Building Mechanism can only be effective if there is international support forthcoming in the interest of ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration. However, the GCM being an instrument of voluntary nature, and the implementation of its elements largely rests in the hands of each sovereign Government, and the quadrennial reporting at the International Migration Review Panel provides a platform to gauge the collective progress in respecting the rights of all migrants irrespective of their legal status.

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[1] Para 24; Global Compact on Migration
https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf

6. On Climate Change, when key stakeholders responsible for much of the emission rates stay outside the climate regime, maintaining the less than 1.5 degree temperature rise has been a real challenge, and the full and effective enjoyment of human rights is at stake. The negative impacts of climate change have risen in its magnitude and frequency often reversing the hard gained socio-economic developments. What further measures could be made to support countries for their mitigation and adaptation efforts, particularly how the 'Rulebook for implementation of the Paris climate agreement' as endorsed at the COP 24 could make meaningful change in protecting the rights of the affected?

7. We agree with what was shared on the potential positive impact that the digital technologies can bring for the betterment of the mankind. However, while bringing the world closer- into one global village- through these new state-of-art technologies, we could also note that the inter-personal relations are taking different shape and dimension. The importance of ethical and rule-based use of digital technologies is of paramount importance. What specific measures multilateral bodies like the UN system could take to ensure collective action in this regard? It is also a relevant question to ask what form of control that humanity will have over Artificial Intelligence, which is going to dominate every aspect of human life, with implications for human rights and international humanitarian law.

8. In conclusion Mr. President, we believe dialogue and collective approaches built through multilateral engagement is the resort for effectively addressing today's challenges and in ensuring rights-based outcomes.-Thank You.