



29th Session of the Human Rights Council
Statement by Sri Lanka
Item 3 – ID with the SR on Right to Education and
IE on International Solidarity

Mr. President,

My delegation thanks the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education for his comprehensive report (A/HRC/29/30), which focuses on the issue of protecting the right to education against commercialization.

Sri Lanka concurs with the Special Rapporteur that, the right to education is an inalienable right of every person and it is a core moral obligation and responsibility of a State to provide access to basic free education to its people without discrimination or exclusion.

Sri Lanka's Parliament passed a Bill on State education policy in 1945 which paved the way for all children between Grade one till University to gain free education in their Mother languages of Sinhalese or Tamil. Further, in 1998, the 'Compulsory Education Act' was introduced, enabling all children in the age group of 5 -14 years to have access to education. This action complimented by the provision of 'free text books, 'uniforms', and 'mid-day meals' and 'subsidized transportation facilities', as well as the societal attitude of taking education as the most powerful option for upward mobility in the society, Sri Lanka has been rightly recognized globally for its achievements in ensuring high enrollment rates and gender parity in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Sri Lanka has achieved gender equality at all levels of education. The ratio of girls to boys 'enrollment has increased at all levels, and has reached the target of 100% in secondary schools.

The Article 27 (2) of the Constitution of Sri Lanka recognizes the complete eradication of illiteracy as one of the fundamental duties of the State and gives the assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels, as a directive principle of State policy.

We note that the Special Rapporteur in his Report has underlined the importance of preserving education as a public good, while promoting the view that the State is the custodian of quality education. In this regard, we highlight the importance of enhancing public investment in education as an essential prerequisite to ensure right to education. The new Government formed following the successful election of President

Maithripala Sirisena on 8 January this year, has pledged to increase the total provision for education from 1.7 percent to 6 percent of the GDP as well as increasing Mahapola scholarships to Rs.5000.

While the increase of investment in education is vital, educational reforms that improve the quality and relevance of education are also essential. Considering the above, the Government is in the process of further developing its education policy with a comprehensive understanding about national and international demands and requirements.

We take note of the SR's recommendations to States to develop regulatory frameworks centred on education as a public good.

To address this issue, based on the principles of justice and equity, the Government will take steps to develop a fair scheme for admitting students to Grade 1 in schools and international schools will be subjected to regular monitoring by the State.

In conclusion, we reiterate the commitment of the Government of Sri Lanka to continue and uphold the long cherished practice of successive governments in my country to ensure the right to education as an inalienable right of the people. We believe in the necessity to maintain policies that can bridge the gap in access to quality education that can help end poverty, bring equity and social justice.

Thank You.