



Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, Geneva

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Minister Peiris tells HC Pillay that the disproportionate negative attention is making the difficult task of reconciliation in Sri Lanka even harder

External Affairs Minister Prof. G. L. Peiris has said, the highly prejudiced actions taken by a few countries and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to give disproportionate negative attention to Sri Lanka, has made the separatist Tamil elements in Sri Lanka and abroad more intransigent, making the intensely difficult task of reconciliation in Sri Lanka, even harder. He said it was unfortunate that Sri Lanka has become a "political football" in the electoral fortunes in some countries.

He made this observation, when as leader of the Sri Lanka delegation to the 25th Human Rights Council sessions now on in Geneva, as is customary, earlier today (6 March) he met with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navaneetham Pillay.

The Minister who briefed the High Commissioner on the continuing efforts on reconciliation and development in the country, said she was well aware of the important political decisions the Government of Sri Lanka had taken in the restoration of normalcy to those affected following the conflict, the channeling of necessary resources to develop the previously conflict affected areas and then holding of the Northern Provincial Council elections- in September 2013, the latter which four previous Presidents over 26 years did not have the courage to do.

Minister Peiris drew to the High Commissioner's attention the objections he made in the national statement yesterday to her report on Sri Lanka to the current Human Rights Council session, where he detailed the lack of objectivity and patent bias evidenced in her report, which also called for the setting up of an international inquiry mechanism on Sri Lanka. He said the report was both one sided and politicized. The Minister observed that it was particularly unfortunate that the High Commissioner should have done so, after having had the benefit of an extended visit to Sri Lanka where she was given unimpeded access. Noting that the High Commissioner had undertaken her visit almost 2 ½ years after the original invitation was extended by the Government of Sri Lanka, he said some of the High Commissioner's comments while in Sri Lanka, as well as her final report, represented a "lost opportunity" in contributing positively to Sri Lanka's reconciliation process and development.

Minister Peiris said the bias and unfairness with which Sri Lanka was being treated was also evident in recent acts such as the refusal of the OHCHR to place Sri Lanka's comments on the High Commissioner's report as an addendum giving it equal visibility, as done when she presented her report on Sri Lanka the previous year. While appreciating that the OHCHR had incorporated some of the glaring errors that were contained in her draft report following Sri Lanka's comments, he said, the GOSL was nevertheless concerned about the methodology and sources that continue to inform the High Commissioner's reports and action on Sri Lanka. He said this eroded the confidence in the UN system, the HRC and the OHCHR.

Sri Lankan Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva Ravinatha Aryasinha and Deputy Permanent Representative Manisha Gunasekera were associated with the Minister at the meeting. Mr. Hanny Megaly, Head of Asia Pacific of the OHCHR and other officials of the OHCHR were associated with the High Commissioner.

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