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Sri Lanka ready to share its experience as best practices on humanitarian effectiveness with other countries

Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the UN in Geneva Ravinatha Aryasinha has said the approaches used in post-tsunami and post-conflict Sri Lanka, with suitable adaptation, could be deployed in managing humanitarian situations in other countries as well, and that the Government of Sri Lanka continues to stand ready to share its experience as best practices on humanitarian effectiveness, with other countries that are similarly placed, in an effort to relieve those who undergo suffering due to humanitarian emergencies.

Ambassador Aryasinha made these observations when he delivered the Sri Lanka statement at the humanitarian affairs segment of the Substantive Session of ECOSOC, held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 17th July 2013.

Ambassador Aryasinha recalled that as a country Sri Lanka had not only grappled with a separatist terrorist conflict for almost 30 long years, but also dealt with an unprecedented natural disaster in the form of the Asian tsunami in 2004. Detailing the systems deployed by the government's Centre of National Operations (CNO) to manage natural disasters, he said the 24/7 operational capacity now allows Sri Lanka to evacuate coastal areas within an hour of a tsunami alert. He also enumerated the significant strides made by the Government of Sri Lanka over the 4 years since the ending of the terrorist conflict, in re-settling IDPs, de-mining, restoring livelihoods and property of those affected and initiating a program to pay compensation to the conflict-affected residents of Northern Province, who lost loved ones and property and sustained injuries, as part of a process of restitution.

Ambassador Aryasinha said, the recent phasing down of the operational role of the UNHCR and ECHO and the re-orientation of the ICRC's activities in Sri Lanka reflect an acknowledgement by the international community of Sri Lanka's success story in responding to humanitarian situations, both manmade and natural.

Emphasizing that the discourse to establish an international system to address the dire situations and the needs of countries in the aftermath of humanitarian catastrophes is important, he said Sri Lanka takes cognizance of the need to not only address the immediate humanitarian needs in the aftermath of a disaster, but also as to how countries could rebuild the lives of affected people by promoting a recovery that is sustainable and development oriented.

Ambassador Aryasinha said Sri Lanka reiterates its support to the humanitarian assistance guiding principles articulated in GA Resolution 46/182, especially on the full adherence to the humanitarian principles: humanity, neutrality and independence, while engaging in negotiations for and during humanitarian operations. In coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of concerned states need to be fully respected. Sri Lanka also wished to reiterate the need for de-politicization of humanitarian aid and that non-governmental organizations involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance to affected countries should also be accountable, both financially and in the work that is carried out by them.

He noted that there are many UN agencies that deliberate on the negative consequences of man-made disasters such as extreme weather patterns, occurring in many corners of the world due to climate change. Primarily at the UNFCCC, extensive discussions for many years are on adaptation for climate change. This requires policies in terms of funding and adapting to face the dire consequences of rising sea levels and unpredictable weather patterns. Unfortunately, the many years of negotiations are at a standstill as funds for adaptation, especially for developing countries are not forthcoming. The establishment of the Green Climate Fund has given hope to the developing countries as they grapple with development challenges in addition to the humanitarian challenges.

Ambassador Aryasinha said, in this light, Sri Lanka looks forward to greater engagement in this dialogue, especially at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2015, where the knowledge and best practices on strengthening humanitarian assistance and promoting humanitarian aid transparency and effectiveness could be shared among all stakeholders. Sri Lanka hoped that this Summit would assist in creating a synergy between the development partners and those who work on disaster preparedness.

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