

SRI LANKA

15/06/11 PM (2)

Right of Reply

The delegation of SL wishes to exercise this Right of Reply in relation to the comments made by the European Union et al...

Having successfully eliminated terrorism two years ago, the people of Sri Lanka, have begun to enjoy the dividends of peace with the hope for a better future.

This post-conflict phase also has its challenges and the GoSL is extremely seized of the need for the healing of wounds as being an important concomitant for sustained reconciliation.

In this context, delivering on its responsibilities in ensuring the welfare of all our citizens, the GoSL ten months ago through the Lessons Learnt & Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), embarked on an independent domestic process founded on the principles of restorative justice, that would enable us to identify the lessons of the past as well as to address issues of reconciliation.

The process of reconciliation, Mr President, involves truth, justice and reparation and the LLRC is proceeding in this direction, having heard the experiences of those affected and examining such testimonies to elicit the truth. Reconciliation, which you no doubt agree is a complex and delicate task, and remains a priority for the Government.

As Sri Lanka continues on this path, it is the genuine support and friendship of all which is of paramount importance. Repetitive rhetoric only frustrates the national efforts to achieve this end.

Regrettably Sri Lanka is faced with biased, prejudiced and unsubstantiated reports that seek to vitiate the atmosphere do little to help improve the situation. In fact they are counter productive to the delicate challenge of reconciliation. Firstly, we heard a number of references to a report deeming it to be of the United Nations. In this instance too we reiterate that the report of the UNSG's Panel of Experts was borne outside an inter-governmental process on an initiative by the UNSG, solely to advise him, and therefore has no official status of the UN system. Through the repetitive references to this report in the Council today, it seems to my delegation that these are yet again un-relented attempts to legitimize an illegitimate process. This too is being resorted to when in fact the Report itself states that facts are unsubstantiated, while Sri Lanka's domestic process has resorted to the collection of information through open and transparent hearings. Shouldn't this process be adequately

recognized and the time given, without seeking to force feed recommendations emanating from an unsubstantiated and flawed process? We would also wish to emphasise that reports commissioned and publicised without an intergovernmental mandate cannot be considered as 'UN reports or documents'. Sri Lanka will however continue its consistent constructive engagement, including on issues related to the reconciliation process, with the UN Secretary General and the United Nations system to achieve our objectives. We shall, as done before, continue to provide regular updates to this Council as well as other intergovernmental processes, on the measures being taken by the GoSL and the progress made in this regard.

The same can be said of videos aired on a British media station without any guarantee of authenticity. Unsubstantiated allegations do not amount to credible evidence simply because a television channel airs it or because it is widely circulated on the internet. Examples of such doctored videos and photos are many as we saw recently in the photographs published on the so called 'dead body' of a terrorist. One should always be mindful and ultra cautious in the reception of unverified material of a political flavour. After all, the same television channel in its reportage on 3 June claims that this august body, the UN Human Rights Council, convened on that day to view their unauthenticated documentary, which everyone in this forum knows is a blatant and malicious false reportage on the proceedings of this Council. With this history, Mr. President, it is also not surprising that the same channel acts as apologists for the terrorist group by portraying the conflict that took place in Sri Lanka as an 'unequal war'. Moreover, its devious methods seem to be a flawed and weak attempt to substantiate allegations of rape and sexual violence mentioned in the Darusman Panel Report, which also incidentally draws from footage aired by the television channel. The Government of Sri Lanka is concerned about the distress the images in the Channel 4 film aired without any guarantee of their authenticity might have caused to the viewers, particularly to those belonging to different communities in Sri Lanka. This is an exercise which is carried out by a small section of international media at the behest of certain parties with vested interests and it caters only to the interests of separatist forces living outside Sri Lanka, the final objective of which is to push Sri Lanka back to war, by way of lacerating the wounds that the country is attempting to heal.

Finally Mr. President, I wish to assure you that if the allegations levelled by any party are found to be genuine, the LLRC will take due note of all such cases and remedial measures will be taken by way of legal sanctions.

Thank you.