



Statement by Sri Lanka
Human Rights Council 22nd Session
Annual Full Day Meeting on Rights of the Child
The right of the child to the highest attainable standard of health

Mr. President,

At the outset, my delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the panelists, who have discussed the challenges in achieving the full realization of the universal right to health with specific focus on the implementation of the right of the child to health.

Sri Lanka affords the highest priority to the full implementation of the Rights of Child at the national level, with the aim of ensuring the best interest of the child.

In the context of health care provision, the concerted policies and initiatives adopted by the government of Sri Lanka since independence have resulted in an impressive record of health indicators in comparison to many developing countries in our region.

Mr. President,

The end of a three decade long terrorist conflict has provided new opportunities for Sri Lanka to further accelerate the initiatives and to continue to work towards the growth, protection and well-being of children in the entire country. The National Health Policy of the Government of Sri Lanka is directed at consolidating the former achievements in the health sector as well as adopting new policies to raise the health and wellness of the population. Among the priority areas are maternal and child care problems, and malnutrition & nutritional deficiencies.

The country's health indicators show a steady improvement over recent decades, particularly in maternal and infant mortality and life expectancy. The Maternal Mortality Ratio of 2.3/10,000 live births in 2000 was an exceptional achievement for a developing country. The improvement of these indicators is predominantly attributed to the Maternal and Child Care Programme implemented nationally as an integral component of the state health care system. Sri Lanka also has the lowest infant mortality rates in the South Asian Region.

It is in the best interest of the child to promote breast feeding which is the right of all children as stated in the Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Sri Lanka is also a signatory. One of the significant policy achievements of the Government of Sri Lanka in this regard is the formulation of a "Code for the Promotion and Protection of Breast Feeding and Monitoring of Infant Formulae and Related Products"

following the international Code, which was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in September 1981.

Mr. President,

The National Policy and Strategy on Health of the Young includes several strategies focused on improving the well-being of the young people, including psychosocial and mental wellbeing, level of nutrition and physical fitness, preventing young people from substance abuse, accidents, injuries and violence as well as providing access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education and services.

The right to sexual and reproductive health is also a fundamental part of the right to health. The government is committed to provide life skills based, age appropriate sexual and reproductive health education in a gender sensitive and culturally acceptable framework and to provide youth friendly reproductive health services.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, Sri Lanka wishes to reiterate its commitment to protect the right of child to adequate health, moving forward in the path to ensure a healthy nation that can contribute effectively and efficiently towards development.

I thank you.