



**Statement by the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**  
**25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**  
**Item 5: Report of the 6<sup>th</sup> session of the Forum on Minority Issues**  
**19<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka takes note of the recommendations that have emanated from 6<sup>th</sup> session of the Forum on Minority Issues held last November, which focussed on the theme of 'Guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities'. We are pleased to have participated in the Forum and shared our experience and best practices.

As a country that is home to several ethnic and religious communities, Sri Lanka notes with interest the many pertinent recommendations that are contained in the document. We are pleased to note that several of these recommendations are already being practiced in Sri Lanka, owing to the centuries-long co-existence among the different ethnic and religious communities in the country and the well-established laws and policies. The rights of minorities, including religious minorities, are firmly entrenched in the Constitution of Sri Lanka in the provision that no citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any such grounds.

However, Mr President, we are also mindful of the many challenges after a three-decade long conflict that had taken its toll on the population of an entire country. We are seeking to address these challenges in line with the National Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Recommendations of the LLRC which contains many recommendations that seek to promote religious tolerance and inter-communal and inter-religious understanding, as well as to address grievances and grant redress to those whose rights have been violated on ethnic or religious grounds.

In line with these recommendations, the Government has granted compensation to places of religious worship and is also rebuilding those places of worship of all religions that were destroyed during the conflict period.

In addition to the provisions of the Penal Code, ICCPR Act No. 56 of 2007 criminalises advocating religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

In keeping with Sri Lanka's societal, cultural and historical norms, regular dialogue continues to take place at various levels to ensure interfaith harmony and understanding among the diverse religious groups.

Mr President, in relation to the recommendation that States should promote the recruitment of persons belonging to religious minorities, including women, into institutions including national, public and government bodies, we are pleased to note that there are increasing numbers of the public service officers including women from the Tamil and the Muslim communities in Sri Lanka who are serving in key government institutions and make a commendable contribution to national development.

Mr. President, these are only a few of the many initiatives that we have taken to promote rights of minorities. Sri Lanka will continue to foster the rights of minorities, including religious minorities, as an integral part of the ongoing national reconciliation process.

I thank you.