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Statement delivered by Mr.Sugeeshwara Gunaratna, Sri Lanka delegation at the Interactive Debate on the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its causes and consequences

Mr.President

We thank the Special Rapporteur for her Report which seeks to build on the previous efforts undertaken to address the issue of gender discrimination and violence against women. She has correctly identified that the elimination of violence against women requires holistic measures to address inter-gender and intra-gender inequality and discrimination, both inter-personal and structural. We wish her all success in her efforts.

Sri Lanka continues to be seized of this issue and its wider implications for the promotion and protection of human rights, as we grapple with the multitude of post-conflict challenges. We are pleased to inform the Council that the GoSL has been successfully engaged in the task of rehabilitation and re-integration of ex-combatants. All female ex-combatants who were beneficiaries of this programme have now been released and are back with their families. Underage ex-combatants, who had been forcibly recruited by the terrorists, have all undergone rehabilitation with those who wished to pursue their education being given every opportunity to do so. Others have been engaged in vocational training and other empowerment programmes. They are all now re-united with their families.

A number of measures have also been undertaken for the protection of violence against women in the former theatre of conflict including through the establishment of additional women and children's desks at police stations and the recruitment of Tamil-speaking officers, both men and women.

Legal reforms to strengthen the substantive and procedural laws of Sri Lanka have been undertaken and have resulted in the enactment of progressive legislation. Sri Lanka enacted the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act and has taken several steps to improve its implementation including, through the undertaking of a number of awareness and training programs for vulnerable groups as well as law enforcement officials, judicial officers, medical and social workers in the public sector.

The National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights 2011-16, which has now been submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for consideration, contains a number of measures to be undertaken for the reduction of incidents involving violence against women. These include, among others, the review of existing legislation to identify gaps as well as to introduce new legislation and ensure effective implementation including of the Plan of Action supporting the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act; further strengthening of the women and children's desks at the police departments and measures to combat sexual harassment at work places through the establishment of cells with powers to deal with grievances.

We will continue to keep the Council and the Special Rapporteur informed of the strides we make in this direction.

Thank you, Mr.President