



Human Rights Council 48th Regular Session

Agenda Item 2: **Oral update on Sri Lanka by the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

Statement by **Hon. Prof. G.L. Peiris Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka** (Geneva, 14 September 2021)

Madam President,

Let me begin by reiterating our strong and continued cooperation with this Council and the United Nations mandated human rights system, in keeping with our Constitution and our international obligations voluntarily undertaken.

Twelve years ago, Sri Lanka eradicated LTTE terrorism on its soil. We have restored peace, security and stability for the benefit of our people. We held firm to our democratic traditions and elections were held at regular intervals with high levels of voter participation – most recently at the 2019 Presidential and 2020 Parliamentary polls. The Government is committed to holding the Provincial Council elections at the earliest.

We are dealing with post-conflict recovery from the perspective of healing. Most recently, 16 LTTE cadres convicted of serious terrorist crimes were granted Presidential pardons. The success of post conflict demining, reconstruction and resettlement programs has contributed immensely to national reconciliation.

Despite the daily challenges of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, let me highlight the progress made in the domestic processes:

- The **Office on Missing Persons (OMP)** as its core function, is finalizing the list of missing persons in collaboration with other agencies.
- **The Office for Reparations (OR)** has processed 3775 claims this year.
- **The Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR)** continues its 8 point action plan.
- **The National Human Rights Commission** is carrying on its mandate.
- A steering committee on **SDG 16** is working towards enhancing peace, justice and strong institutions.

- A Cabinet Sub Committee was appointed to **revisit the PTA** and to bring it in line with international norms and best practices. A report will be submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers at the end of this month. **An Advisory Board** was appointed to look into cases of detention under the PTA and to make recommendations to deal with such cases expeditiously. Speedy disposal of cases under the PTA is also taking place.
- A **Commission of Inquiry** headed by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court was established to address issues on accountability and missing persons and to revisit recommendations by previous Commissions. The COI submitted its Interim report to the President. The final report will be submitted within the next 06 months.
- We are maintaining vigorous engagement with **civil society** to obtain their insights and to harness their support in achieving reconciliation and development.

Madam President,

Sri Lanka continues to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of the appalling terrorist attack on Easter Sunday in 2019 complying with due process of law in all respects. As always, we will remain vigilant in combatting terrorism and protecting Sri Lankans of all religions.

Madam President,

We reject the proposal for any external initiatives purportedly established by Resolution 46/1 while domestic processes are vigorously addressing the relevant matters. This will polarize our society, as we experienced with Resolution 30/1. The Council must adhere to its founding principles. External initiatives embarked upon without the cooperation of the country concerned cannot achieve their stated goals, and will be subject to politicization. The resources expended on this initiative are unwarranted, especially when they are urgently needed for humanitarian and other constructive purposes in many parts of the world.

Madam President,

Under the current and pressing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we consider it a basic duty of a government to ensure the uninterrupted supply of commodities essential to the life of the community. We are open in acknowledging our challenges and as a responsible and democratic government, we are committed to achieving tangible progress on the entire range of issues relating to accountability, reconciliation, human rights, peace and sustainable development.

I thank you, Madam President.
