



**Right of Reply
Sri Lanka
26th Session of the Human Rights Council
Agenda Item 4, 23 June 2014**

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka wishes to exercise its right of reply with regard to the statement made by Canada claiming ‘ongoing use of rape and sexual violence by Sri Lankan security forces against perceived government opponents.’

Sri Lanka strongly rejects this claim which is not substantiated by verifiable data or evidence.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka has a well-established, zero tolerance policy on sexual and gender based violence against women, and continues to take strong action against reported cases of violence against women.

The involvement of security forces personnel as a percentage of the total incidents of sexual violence is low, both in the conflict and the post-conflict periods. During the conflict period (January 2007- May 2009), 7 security forces personnel were reported as having been involved in 5 incidents of

sexual violence in the Northern Province, out of a total of 125 persons accused in 119 incidents for the entire Northern Province. In the post-conflict period (from 2009 - May 2012), 10 security forces personnel were reported as having been involved in 6 incidents of sexual violence in the Northern Province, out of a total of 307 persons accused in 256 incidents for the entire Northern Province. The involvement of security forces personnel as a percentage of the total accused stands at 5.6% in the conflict period, and 3.3% in the post-conflict period. Any allegations supported by credible evidence are dealt with firmly by the authorities.

Legal action has been taken by the Government in all cases in which the Sri Lankan security personnel have been involved. The Military has taken stringent action, including discharging offenders or imposing other punishments in accordance with the military and penal codes. Charges have also been filed in normal criminal courts. Along with the application of law to personnel in breach of the law, the Sri Lankan military continues to provide large-scale human rights training to its personnel with the assistance of the ICRC.

Further, Sri Lanka's reconciliation mechanism, the National Plan of Action for implementation of the Recommendations of the LLRC (LLRC NPoA) has also taken concrete measures to address the specific concerns, vulnerabilities of victims of conflict, especially women and children.

Other extensive measures have also been taken by the Government to ensure the wellbeing and security of women and girls, including the establishment of Women and Children's Police Desks in police stations, sexual and gender based violence Help Desks in hospitals, and Child and Women Development Units at Divisional Secretariats in the Northern and the Eastern provinces; as well as the provision of health, security and legal assistance to women hospitalized as a result of gender-based violence, and the conduct of sensitisation programmes on prevention of violence against women and protection of women's rights to police and security forces, community leaders and the general public.

Mr. President,

Against this background, Sri Lanka strongly rejects the inference that the presence of military contributes to the insecurity of women and girls in the former conflict-affected areas. This remains at the level of allegation unsubstantiated by verifiable data. Further, no evidence has been directly brought to the attention of Government authorities by any claimant, to enable the conduct of credible investigations and prosecutions. Also, what exactly is meant by Canada by 'perceived government opponents' remains deliberately unclear.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka would therefore like to request Canada to refrain from making irresponsible, unsubstantiated claims driven by diaspora imperatives which is not helpful to the process of bringing about genuine reconciliation

among communities in the aftermath of such a grievous and long-drawn conflict.

Thank you.