



Statement by Sri Lanka
31st Session of the Human Rights Council
Agenda Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the
Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues
15 March 2016

Mr. President,

Government of Sri Lanka notes the Report (A/HRC/31/56) by the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues.

Sri Lanka is pleased that the Special Rapporteur has accepted the invitation extended by the Government to visit Sri Lanka, and we look forward to working with the Special Rapporteur to finalize dates for the visit in September this year.

In this context, we wish to draw the attention of the Special Rapporteur to references in paragraphs 35 and 71 of her Report which are inaccurate and completely misrepresentative of reality in respect of society and societal formation or structures in Sri Lanka.

For instance, the references to caste in paragraph 35 is completely erroneous: Sinhala, Sri Lanka Tamil and Indian Tamil are not at all categories of caste.

Moreover, it is completely incorrect to state that people in Sri Lanka are under pressure to follow caste based employment. Untouchability, as stated in the report is not a feature one would find in Sri Lankan society at all.

The term “Dalit” has no relevance whatsoever in the context of Sri Lanka. There is no community or caste identified by such nomenclature in Sri Lanka.

As pointed out in Paragraph 110 of the Report, the Constitution of Sri Lanka in Article 12(2) specifically prohibits discrimination based on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any such grounds. Further, national legislation titled the Prevention of Social Disabilities Act No. 21 of 1957 (as amended) has made it an offence for any person

to impose any social disability on another person, by reason of such other person's caste.

The Government of Sri Lanka is committed to build an egalitarian society where human dignity is valued irrespective of religion, caste, ethnicity or other such grounds.

Mr. President,

We do not wish to use this forum to go into detail on these issues. Nevertheless we are disappointed that such incorrect, inaccurate and misleading references have been made to Sri Lanka in an important Report of this nature presented to this Council.

Mr. President,

Especially in the context of factually incorrect reference to Sri Lanka in the Report, we welcome the visit of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues to Sri Lanka, as such a visit will certainly enable the Special Rapporteur to engage with all concerned in my country to obtain the factual position in this regard and accurate information which will clarify and clear misconceptions pertaining to the areas mentioned in this report.

We also look forward to being able to seek the expert advice of the Special Rapporteur, on any outstanding issues or issues of concern during the visit.

Thank you.