



## **Introductory Statement**

At the Presentation of  
Sri Lanka's combined 10<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Periodic Reports (CERD/C/LKA/10-17)  
submitted under the  
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial  
Discrimination (CERD)

by

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90<sup>th</sup> Session of the CERD Committee

15 August 2016

**The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations  
and other International Organizations in Geneva**

**Presentation of Sri Lanka's 10<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> Periodic Reports submitted under the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**

**OPENING STATEMENT**

Madam Chairperson,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Delegations and Observers to this Meeting of the CERD, to consider Sri Lanka's 10<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> Periodic Reports under the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD),

I am pleased to have this opportunity to make this opening presentation on behalf of Sri Lanka.

The delegation present with me here today comprises ,

- Ambassador Abdul Azeez, Senior Director-General in-charge of the European Union, Multilateral Treaties, and the Commonwealth, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
- Mr. Nerin Pulle, Deputy Solicitor General from the Attorney-General's Department,
- Mrs. Samantha Jayasuriya, Deputy Permanent Representative at Sri Lanka's Permanent Mission in Geneva, and
- Ms. Dilini Gunasekera and Mrs. Mafusa Lafir, Second Secretaries at the Permanent Mission.
- In preparing our written report, and in preparing for this review, we have followed a consultative process.
- We would like to thank the civil society organizations which have made useful and constructive comments and observations in their submissions to this Committee on Sri Lanka's periodic report.

Madam Chair,

- It has been 34 years since Sri Lanka became a State Party to this important International human rights instrument.
- The constructive engagements we have had with CERD and the human rights treaty body processes in general have proved useful for us in the implementation of our obligations.
- As you would be aware, there was a change of leadership in Sri Lanka in January 2015, following the Presidential Election and the formation of a National Unity Government in August 2015 following the Parliamentary Election.

- These two elections, especially the Parliamentary Election in August 2015 enabled Sri Lanka's two main political parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) to come to an understanding to form a Government of National Unity. This was a long needed step in our country, especially following the end of over two decades of conflict, to provide the policy stability required to take steps to implement the necessary policies for strengthening, upholding, and promoting human rights; strengthening democracy; and to work towards national reconciliation and development. The Tamil National Alliance is now the main opposition party in Parliament, led by the Hon. R. Sampanthan.
- The priority and importance given to human rights and reconciliation in Sri Lanka, under the new political culture ushered in last year, is best demonstrated, by the passage of legislation just last week on Thursday 11 August, without a vote, to establish an Office on Missing Persons with a view to ensure non-recurrence of a phenomena that has plagued all communities for long years. Yet, one that could not be addressed in this constructive manner, before. All parties in Parliament including the main Opposition Tamil National Alliance and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna which is also in Opposition supported the Government in this effort.
- We are also in the process of working on Constitutional Reform. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of January this year, a Resolution was tabled for the Parliament to sit as a Constitutional Assembly to consider proposals for Constitutional Reform. A Public Representations Committee was formed to seek the views of all the people and they have now handed over their report to the Government. A steering Committee headed by the Prime Minister and sub-committees are currently working on the actual drafting which is expected to be finalized before the end of this year, for the consideration of the Constitutional Assembly.
- As you are aware, there has been an unusually long lapse between Sri Lanka's present engagement with this Committee and Sri Lanka's previous engagement in 2001.
- Our engagement with this Committee today is in the spirit of the priority given by Sri Lanka's leadership and its people at elections last year, to human rights, equality, freedom, democracy, and reconciliation.
- There are several lacunae in the Report presented to the Committee last year. This is largely due to the inability and lack of space to address certain issues due to the policies adopted by the previous administration. Our current approach to issues is different. Today, as you would be aware, Sri Lanka follows a policy of constructive engagement with the international community including all human rights mechanisms. We have extended a standing invitation to Special Rapporteurs and we work closely with the OHCHR.

- Sri Lanka is at present in the process of engaging in consultations for the drafting of the National Human Rights Action Plan 2017-2021, and also constitutional reform. Therefore, it is our intention to address all the requests, observations and recommendations made by the Committee and issues highlighted and flagged by the Committee in a positive and constructive manner, and seek to address these issues in the new National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) for 2017-2021. These issues would be referred to the drafting Committee of the NHRAP which also comprises of civil society representatives and members of the National Human Rights Commission

- During my opening presentation today ;

While taking note of the concluding observations of the Committee, I will place before you the socio-political scenario in the country during the last 15 years.

I will also brief you on the significant developments which have taken place in Sri Lanka, as relevant to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, since we submitted the 10<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> Periodic Reports to the Committee in October 2015. Forging reconciliation, strengthening the rule of law, combating bribery and corruption, improving, promoting, protecting and strengthening human rights, and ensuring the peace dividend to the people, have been the key priorities of the Government since the Presidential election on 8 January 2015 which was endorsed by the people of the country at the Parliamentary Election in August last year (2015).

- As time permits, we will endeavor to provide you with clarifications and additional details on issues highlighted in the 'list of thematic issues' by the esteemed Committee following our written submission in October 2015.

Madam Chairperson,

#### A) **Developments in the period of review : 2001 to 2015**

##### i. **Conflict period**

- The atmosphere that prevailed in Sri Lanka for almost three decades of conflict until 2009 was one of fear anxiety, mistrust and suspicion. While suicide bombings, targeting of non-military installations and public property, assassination of political leaders on all sides including Tamil politicians, recruitment of children as combatants by the terrorists, and killing of civilians from all walks of life was a daily reality, our society had to contend with as a result of terrorism. This suffering and trauma transcended race, religion, language and caste. No one was spared.

- This was despite efforts by successive Governments to arrive at a negotiated political settlement with the separatist terrorist group. The terrorist group was banned and declared as such by several countries including the USA, India, the European Union and Canada. As in similar situations in several parts of the world, in Sri Lanka too, during the conflict era, preserving human rights while fighting terrorism was considerable challenge that all successive governments had to face. Although the conflict ended in May 2009, several important issues remained unaddressed. The present Government seeks to address these issues including the violation of human rights and humanitarian law by both sides, during the conflict, including addressing the issue of Missing Persons through legislation enacted just last week, that will be open to look at instances not only relating to the conflict in the North and the East of the country but cases relating to the insurrections in the South and security forces personnel who are Missing in Action.

Madam Chairperson,

## **ii. Post-conflict Period**

- It is our firm belief that, for a country in transition from conflict to peace, which is multi-ethnic (74.9 % Sinhalese, 11.2 % Sri Lankan Tamils, 4.1 % Indian Tamils or Estate Tamils, 9.3% of Muslims, other ethnic groups including Burgher, Malay and Sri Lanka Chetty consist of 0.5% of the population<sup>1</sup>) and multi-religious ( 70.1% Buddhists, 12.6 % Hindus, 6.2 % Roman Catholics, 9.7 % Islam, 1.4 % Other Christian<sup>2</sup>), achieving reconciliation among all communities and ensuring non-recurrence of conflicts, including by addressing the root causes, are essential for guaranteeing the equal enjoyment of human rights without discrimination for all peoples, and upholding individual rights. In the immediate post-conflict period, priority had been given to rebuild infrastructure, restore public order, and to re-introduce political structures in the conflict affected provinces. As a result, considerable strides were made in de-mining, resettlement and rehabilitation of IDPs, and infrastructure development in the Northern and Eastern Provinces; Provincial council elections were held in the Eastern Province in May 2008,<sup>3</sup>, followed by the Northern Province in September 2013 - for the first time after 25 years.
- Despite these steps, there was no clear and determined effort to address matters necessary for reconciliation recommended in the previous Government's own Report of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), there was a deterioration of the

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<sup>1</sup> Census of Population and Housing 2012, Dept. Of Census and Statistics.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.slections.gov.lk/web/images/pdf/election\\_results/PCE/ProvincialCouncilElections2008.pdf](http://www.slections.gov.lk/web/images/pdf/election_results/PCE/ProvincialCouncilElections2008.pdf)

rule of law, stifling of media freedom, disengagement and confrontation with the international community including human rights mechanisms, increasing corruption and no credible measures to combat large scale corruption, no emphasis on good governance, and lack of initiative to deal with accountability issues, missing persons, and steps required to ensure non-recurrence.

- It is in this backdrop that the people of our country voted twice last year, at the Presidential election on 8<sup>th</sup> January and at the Parliamentary election in August 2015 to usher in good governance, stronger democracy, stronger institutions, human rights, reconciliation, rule of law, economic development, durable peace and non-recurrence to ensure prosperity for all Sri Lankans. As I explained at the outset, since January 2015, Sri Lanka has made significant progress in strengthening good governance and the rule of law, promoting and protecting human rights, and fostering reconciliation, while engaging and working closely with the international community. This approach has received wide acknowledgement and support from the international community.
- At the same time, the present Government has also placed strong emphasis on accelerating economic growth and sustainable development to improve the living standards of the people and to ensure their socio-economic well-being. The necessary economic reforms to secure investment, create jobs, improve infrastructure, and enhance trade are currently being worked on by the relevant authorities in Government. A series of important legislative measures that are necessary for this purpose are also currently being worked on.

Following are some of the important developments in this regard:

- The Government issued a **Declaration of Peace** on the Independence Day, on 4 February 2015, pledging to ensure non-recurrence; and on Independence Day this year, the practice of singing the National Anthem in both official languages, Sinhala and Tamil was restored.
- Annual triumphant Victory Parades held by the previous Government to mark the end of the conflict on 19 May was discontinued and families and relatives of all were restored their right to grieve the loss of their loved ones.
- The passage of the **19<sup>th</sup> Amendment**<sup>4</sup> to the Constitution and repealing of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, reintroduced the two term limit for the post of Executive President, with each term also limited to 5 years instead of 6 in the constitution previously. The 19<sup>th</sup> amendment also saw the re-establishment of independent commissions for oversight of key

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<sup>4</sup> Following its passage in Parliament on 28 April 2015, the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution was certified on 15 May 2015.

institutions including the judicial service, human rights, bribery & corruption, elections, public service, finance, delimitation, procurement and audit. Right of access to Information was recognized as a Fundamental Right through the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, and on 24<sup>th</sup> June this year, the Right to Information Act was passed by Parliament, unanimously. Moreover, through the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the promotion of national reconciliation and integration are constitutionally recognized as **duties of the President.**<sup>5</sup>;

- Civilians were appointed as Governors of the Northern and Eastern Provinces in February 2015, positions previously held by retired security forces personnel.
- A four-pillar mechanism has been proposed to address the ‘right to truth’, ‘right to justice’, ‘reparations’ and ‘non-recurrence’ and the exact contours and modalities of these mechanisms will be defined following the finalization of the consultations currently being conducted by a 11-member Task Force. This Task Force comprises in its entirety of civil society leaders from all ethnic groups of the country, with gender balance.
- Media freedom was restored and all local and foreign journalists are now free to travel anywhere in the country without any restrictions. Journalists living in exile were invited to return to Sri Lanka with a guarantee of their safety,<sup>6</sup> and all restrictions imposed by the previous administration on providing Sri Lankan passports to those who had sought asylum overseas have been lifted.

## **B. Developments since the Submission of the CERD Periodic Reports**

Madam Chair,

The Government has continued to take many policy steps to prevent racial discrimination and to ensure a rights and merit based society. I am happy to note the following developments in particular, as it happened pursuant to our written submission;

- The **National Human Rights Commission** is empowered and it is now headed by Dr. Ms. Deepika Udagama, a Professor of Law and Human Rights Activist appointed in October 2015, by the Constitutional Council.<sup>7</sup> It has a broad mandate to guarantee fundamental human rights enshrined in the Constitution by law and practice.
- A 10-year National Plan for a **Trilingual Sri Lanka** was launched in January 2012 for the implementation of the Trilingual Policy. In line with

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<sup>5</sup> Advancing Human Rights, Accountability, Reconciliation and Good Governance in Sri Lanka: January 2015-June 2016 (Festina Lente) as of 28 June 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Advancing Human Rights, Accountability, Reconciliation and Good Governance in Sri Lanka: January 2015-June 2016 (Festina Lente) as of 28 June 2016.

this Plan, the Government has initiated a program to make public sector workers bilingual, with the ability to converse in both Sinhala and Tamil. Civil servants and Police officers have been recruited and trained to serve the public in the North and the East in the language of their choice. Special focus is being placed on enabling police personnel serving in the North to have a sound knowledge of Tamil.<sup>8</sup>

During the period from 2009-2015, 1,153 Tamil-speaking Police Officers, including female officers have been recruited. 26 Tamil-speaking female officers and 14 sub-Inspectors whose vernacular is Tamil have been recruited in 2016.

- The National Department for Registration of Persons has taken measures to issue computerized bilingual identity cards in the two official languages, Sinhala and Tamil. While identity cards of minority communities are already being issued in two languages for their convenience, the new decision will be applicable to all identity cards, as a corrective measure and to ensure equity for all citizens.<sup>9</sup>
- Sri Lanka has continued its constructive **engagement with Human Rights mechanisms** including with the Human Rights Council and special procedures mandate holders as well as with the treaty bodies. A number of positive interactions have taken place since the submission of our Periodic Report in October 2015, while several others will take place during the next few months;
  - The Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) visited Sri Lanka from 9 to 18 November 2015 at the invitation of the Government. They were given access to all facilities, including the Trincomalee Navy Base. This is the first visit of the Working Group to Sri Lanka in 16 years. The Working Group will present the report of its visit to Sri Lanka during the upcoming 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council to be held in September 2016.
  - Sri Lanka extended a Standing Invitation to all UN thematic Special Procedures Mandate Holders to visit Sri Lanka on 17 December 2015.
  - The GoSL in January 2016 informed the UN Human Rights Committee that Sri Lanka is in the process of considering resumption of responding to the individual communications submitted as per the provision of the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR.

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<sup>8</sup> Para 172, Sri Lanka's 5th Periodic Report to the CESCR, submitted on 7 October 2015

<sup>9</sup> Para 173, Sri Lanka's 5th Periodic Report to the CESCR, submitted on 7 October 2015.

- The Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence Mr. Pablo de Greiff visited Sri Lanka from 30 March – 3 April 2015, 26 January – 1 February 2016 and in June 2016 at the invitation of the Government, in a technical advisory capacity. A Regional Meeting on transitional justice in cooperation with the Special Rapporteur, is scheduled to be hosted by Sri Lanka in Colombo in November 2016.
  - The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein visited Sri Lanka from 6-9 February 2016. The Government facilitated wide-ranging meetings with victims, Opposition, key Ministers, the President and Prime Minister, key officials including the Defence Secretary and the Heads of Security Forces and Intelligence Services and facilitated his travel to Jaffna and Trincomalee.
  - The Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers Ms. Monica Pinto, and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment Mr. Juan Mendez visited Sri Lanka from 29 April to 7 May 2016.
  - From 1-2 September 2016 Sri Lanka will present its second Periodic report under the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW).
  - The Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Ms. Rita Izsák is scheduled to visit Sri Lanka from 10-20 October 2016, and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly, Mr. Maina Kiai, will visit in the first quarter of year 2017.
  - From 15- 16 November 2016, Sri Lanka will present its 5<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).
  - Sri Lanka initiated special engagement with the European Union on Human Rights, in the format of a Working Group on Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights. The first meeting of this Working Group was held in January this year.
- Through these practical measures, the Government has demonstrated its willingness to engage and cooperate constructively with the UN human rights mechanisms as well as other organizations, with a view to strengthening human rights for the benefit of the population as a whole without any discrimination.

## **Legislative and Institutional mechanisms to support implementation of the Convention**

Madam Chair,

- Article 12 (2) of the Constitution of Sri Lanka guarantees the fundamental right to equality where “No citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion, place of birth or any one of such grounds.”
- Reflecting this specific stipulation in the Constitution, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment has been enacted as a part of a constitutional reform process that ensures diversity and pluralism.
- In this context, I wish to draw the attention of this Committee, to the Article 41 A (4) of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which specifically provides that in nominating persons to the Constitutional Council, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition shall consult the leaders of political parties and independent groups represented in Parliament. This is to ensure that the Constitutional Council reflects the pluralistic character of Sri Lankan society, including professional and social diversity.
- Furthermore, Article 41 B (3) of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment obliges the members of the Constitutional Council, when recommending persons as Chairmen or members to the Independent Commissions as specified in the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, to endeavor to ensure that such recommendations reflect the pluralistic character of Sri Lankan society, including gender.
- In September 2015, the Parliament approved the nominations of Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy and Shibly Aziz P.C as members of the Constitutional Council. All appointments to the nine independent Commissions, under the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, was completed and activated in 2015.
- Following the Parliamentary elections held on 17 August 2015, and the formation of the National Unity Government, Mr. R. Sampanthan of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), who is the leader of the party that obtained the third highest number of votes, was appointed as the Leader of the Opposition. This appointment, as well as the appointment of the current Chief Justice of Sri Lanka in January are clear indicators that extraneous considerations such as ethnicity, religion, class or gender are not inhibiting factors in rising to public office.

In the recent past, the Government has provided the necessary broad framework to prevent discrimination, and is further strengthened where relevant in the following manner;

- Endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to **End Sexual Violence in Conflict** on 12 January 2016

- Ratified the **ILO Convention on Employment Policy** (C122 - Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122) on 3 February 2016
- Held an inaugural policy workshop on 24 February 2016 to commence deliberations on a draft **National Policy on Reconciliation**. Key representatives from Ministries, Agencies, academics and civil society leaders participated in this workshop. The draft National Policy on Reconciliation has been finalized. The **National Policy on durable solutions to conflict affected displacement** has also been finalized.
- Also ratified the **Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities** (CRPD) on 8 February 2016 and is in the process of drafting enabling legislation to give effect to the provisions of the Convention.
- Passed the **Prescription (Special Provisions) Act No. 5 of 2016** by Parliament and it was certified on 26 April 2016. This Act enables special legal provisions to be made in respect of persons who are unable to pursue their rights in court for the recovery of any immovable property including land due to the activities of any militant terrorist group which prevailed in Sri Lanka.<sup>10</sup>
- Passed the **Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses Act** No. 4 of 2015 and certified on 7 March 2015. The Act provides, inter alia, for the setting out of rights and entitlements of victims of crime and witnesses and the protection and promotion of such rights and entitlements and to give effect to appropriate international norms, standards and best practices relating to the protection of victims of crime and witnesses; the establishment of the national authority for the protection of victims of crime and witnesses<sup>11</sup>
- Ratified the **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance** (CED) on 25 May 2016 and the process of promulgating enabling legislation has been set in motion.
- Enforced the **Right to Information Act** by passing a Bill in the Parliament unanimously (without a vote) on 24 June 2016, which became law with effect from 4 August 2016. In the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees the Right of Access to Information in Article 14 A of the Constitution, this Act ensures the need to foster a culture of transparency and accountability in public authorities by giving effect to the right of access of information and thereby promoting a society in which the people of Sri Lanka would be

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<sup>10</sup> Prescription (Special Provisions) Act No. 5 of 2016

<sup>11</sup> Preamble of the Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses Act No. 4 of 2015

able to more fully participate in public life through combatting corruption and promoting accountability and good governance.<sup>12</sup>

- Passed the Bill on ‘Office on Missing Persons (OMP) (establishment, administration and discharge of functions)’ to establish a **Permanent and Independent Office on Missing Persons** with amendments on 11 August 2016. This is an essential component of the truth-seeking process.<sup>13</sup>
- Also the Cabinet of Ministers has approved the issuing of **Certificates of Absence**. The draft legislation in this regard was gazetted, and placed on the Order Paper of Parliament on 5 July 2016.

‘Right to Truth or the Right to Know’, will become a reality with the establishment of the OMP - as a statutory body unlike the previously appointed ad hoc Commissions. The primary objective of the OMP being guaranteeing the families of the victims their right to know the truth,. This right is being upheld for all victims with no restrictions in terms of geography or race unlike previous ad hoc Commissions. The mandate of the Office is left open-ended. They are free to examine any case of a missing person that had taken place at any time or in future, and any incident despite where in Sri Lanka a person may have disappeared. The grief faced by families of the missing were recognized through this legislative step, their psychological and psychosocial needs, and their difficulties in moving ahead with life without closure. Administrative difficulties that they face with regard to property rights or matrimonial issues were also taken into account and the Government, having consulted the ICRC and other experts, initiated a process to issue ‘*Certificates of Absence*’, to enable the families to act on issues related to inheritance, legal matters such as on property rights, matrimonial issues etc. The Act aims to eliminate certain socio-legal impediments faced by the families of victims, without compromising the victims and their families’ ‘Right to Justice’. This is the second pillar in the reconciliation process. As for the third pillar, there will be a reparations mechanism to help those NOKs who need socio-economic or other support. The fourth pillar aims at ensuring non-recurrence and achieving reconciliation.

- To follow the above reconciliation and truth-seeking process systematically and in a timely manner, a **Secretariat for Coordinating the Reconciliation Mechanisms (SCRM)** has been set up in December 2015 under the Office of the Prime Minister. In March 2016, Mr. Mano Tittawella was appointed as **Secretary-General of SCRM**.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Preamble of the Right to Information Act No. 12 of 2016, certified on 4 August 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Statement by Hon. MFA at the HRC 32 on 29 June 2016, updated.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Considerable efforts have also been taken to make the process of designing the mechanisms an inclusive and transparent one and a **Consultation Task Force** consisting of 11 eminent civil society/NGO leaders have been appointed by the Government in February 2016 to carry out the public Consultations. The Task Force has also called for submissions on these mechanisms from diaspora organizations and individuals and extended its deadline for submissions until 10 August 2016.

### **Constitutional process**

- Constitutional reform is essential to ensure the sustainability of the progress on the proposed reconciliation mechanisms and all other efforts to ensure equal rights and individual rights and justice for all, ensure durable peace and ensure non-recurrence of conflict .
- The Parliament, by a resolution for the appointment of the Constitutional Assembly has resolved that there shall be a “Committee, which shall have the powers of a Committee of the whole Parliament consisting of all Members of Parliament, for the purpose of deliberating, and seeking the views and advice of the People, on a Constitution for Sri Lanka, and preparing a draft of a Constitution Bill for the consideration of Parliament in the exercise of its powers under Article 75 of the Constitution”<sup>15</sup>.
- A Public Representations Committee tasked with seeking the views of the public for the Constitution submitted its report to the Government on 31 May 2016. The report is publicly available including online.<sup>16</sup>.

### **National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) Process**

- The Government has also undertaken a voluntary commitment to introduce a National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) from 2017-2021.
- In May 2016 the Cabinet approved an Inter-Ministerial Committee tasked with drafting the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2017-2021, assisted by a Steering Committee of officials and experts and drafting committees working on each of the thematic areas. The Drafting Committee on CERD will cover the whole range of recommendations and issues as relevant to that Convention and it is hoped that the recommendations arising from this Committee will provide inputs to the NHRAP.
- The Cabinet of Ministers has directed the process of formulating the NHRAP which has already commenced and expected to be completed by October 2016. The draft Plan will be open for consultations with the stakeholders including the civil society working in all thematic areas, which include the core Human Rights Conventions. Following this, the NHRAP will be sent for the

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<sup>15</sup> Resolution for the appointment of the Constitutional Assembly,  
[http://www.parliament.lk/files/documents\\_news/ca-motion/motion-en.pdf](http://www.parliament.lk/files/documents_news/ca-motion/motion-en.pdf)

consideration of the Cabinet of Ministers. The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka is engaged in this process and is also facilitating the participation of civil society representatives, coordinating the drafting processes.

- These processes would ensure equal rights, justice and dignity for all communities in Sri Lanka.

### **Conclusion**

In Conclusion Madam Chair,

- We look forward to a fruitful dialogue with the distinguished members of this Committee.
- We will be glad to further expand on any of the matters mentioned, or clarify on any other specific issues that you might have.
- We believe firmly that your recommendations will assist the Government of Sri Lanka to carry forward the progressive steps taken so far in the promotion and protection of human rights of all Sri Lankans.
- We thank you Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee, and we also wish to thank the Secretariat for their kind technical assistance provided to our delegation during this review process.

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