



Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, Geneva

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Sri Lanka says humanitarian crises can be overcome with political commitment

"In contrast to the considerable challenges in the humanitarian crises that continue to engulf many parts of the world today, Sri Lanka's achievements particularly following the ending of the terrorist conflict provides confidence and hope that even the most severe and insurmountable humanitarian crisis can be overcome, with political commitment."

Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha made this observation during the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons in the Human Rights Council on Thursday, 12 June. The Special Rapporteur presented his report to the 26th session of the Council, currently underway in Geneva, pursuant to his mission to Sri Lanka in December 2013 at the invitation of the Government. He undertook several field visits during his mission, where he was provided with unfettered access, to engage with a variety of actors, including civil society.

Regretting "the tendency among sections of the international community to undervalue and downplay the tremendous humanitarian achievement of the Government of Sri Lanka", the Ambassador said "this shows disrespect not only to the Government and its domestic and international partners, but most of all to those who have at last emerged from the suffering caused by 30 years of terrorist conflict". He reminded the Council that "the humane approach of the Government was not a mere post-conflict development, but had been the hallmark of the Government's approach to its citizens in the former conflict-affected areas during the entirety of the conflict", prompting Dr. Beyani's predecessors Dr Francis Deng and Prof. Walter Kalin to commend Sri Lanka for this exceptional exercise. He said Sri Lanka's policy had been described by the former Executive Director of UNICEF late James Grant, as being "uniquely humanitarian in a conflict situation".

Acknowledging the Special Rapporteur's contribution to address the issue of resettlement of IDPs in the context of Sri Lanka's reconciliation process, the Ambassador assured that "Sri Lanka remains committed to share its experience and best practices with respect to IDPs with the international community".

The Ambassador elaborated on the many significant achievements made by Sri Lanka in addressing issues of IDPs within the framework of the LLRC National Action Plan as well as in cooperation with the UNHCR and UNOCHA, especially the Joint Needs Assessment conducted by the latter in consultation with the Presidential

Task Force for Resettlement, Security and Development of the Northern Province (PTF) to address residual displacement needs, including those of displaced persons, with a view to provision of durable solutions to IDPs.

Referring to "some of the comments and recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur in his report, inter alia, with regard to alleged violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, call for the involvement of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, allegations of impunity of security forces", Ambassador Aryasinha said "the Government of Sri Lanka regretted that the Special Rapporteur had exceeded his mandate as stipulated in Council Resolution 5/2". He said "through such politicized comments and recommendations, the Special Rapporteur had regrettably compromised on the impartiality and objectivity principles central to the Code of Conduct of special procedures mandate holders".

Associated with Ambassador Aryasinha were Mr. S.B. Divaratne, Presidential Advisor and previously Secretary of the PTF, Ms. Manisha Gunasekera, Deputy Permanent Representative and Ms. Priyanga Wickramasinghe, Minister Counsellor of the Sri Lanka Permanent Mission in Geneva.

(Full statement is attached)

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