



24th Session of the HRC – Agenda Item 3
Statement by Sri Lanka
At the ID with SRSG on Indigenous Peoples

Mr. President,

The delegation of Sri Lanka thanks the High Commissioner for her Report on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on the activities undertaken for the promotion and the full application of the provisions of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Mr. James Anaya for his thematic report. We also take note of the Report of the Expert Mechanism on access to justice in the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples

Sri Lanka welcomes the activities of the OHCHR towards the promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples, including through the UN Indigenous Peoples Partnership Initiative, capacity building, and guidance tools.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka is home to the indigenous “vanniyaletto” also known as the “adivasi” people, who have inhabited the country from the Neolithic Age. Despite the challenges posed by modernization and development, the indigenous people of Sri Lanka have maintained their own identity, traditional knowledge, customs and way of life, as enshrined in the UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples of 2007.

The indigenous people of Sri Lanka are recognized as citizens of the country under the Citizenship Act of 1948 and enjoy all rights and privileges enshrined in the Constitution of Sri Lanka. All Sri Lankan citizens including the indigenous community is guaranteed equal access to justice through the constitutional provisions.

The Government of Sri Lanka has adopted several measures to ensure the preservation of the traditional lifestyle of the indigenous people. It has launched a three-year project, implemented by the Ministries of Cultural Affairs and National Heritage, to table a draft bill to safeguard the existence and rights of the indigenous people. The project also provides legal facilities to the indigenous community, measures to conserve their traditional knowledge and traditional medicines, and support to establish a museum on their heritage, among others. In order to create greater awareness about the indigenous community, which is instrumental towards the preservation of their lifestyle, the Government has also established several cultural centres and documented the history of the community and their way of life.

The “vanniyaletto” is by no means an isolated community. They have access to free education, health and the political leadership of the country. The Head of State recently joined together with the “vannyaletto” to commemorate the day of indigenous people.

In conclusion, Mr. President, Sri Lanka will continue to protect the cultural heritage and traditional lifestyle of its indigenous community.

Thank you