
Government urges UNHCR to rethink its policy of designating only international NGOs as its partners

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The government has urged the UNHCR to rethink its policy of designating only International NGOs as its partners as it did in Sri Lanka last year. Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha, Secretary General of the Peace Secretariat and Secretary to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights said that the United Nations must work with government or with local organisations.

“That will help the nation as a whole to develop capacity at all levels. We appreciate foreign expertise when it is essential, but when this means a high proportion of funds meant to benefit our people instead winging its way westward, we would prefer it if a concerted effort were made to ensure, not only value for money, but also encouragement of national talent,” he said in Geneva. “UNHCR is the partner of government, the preferred partner I should add in such situations, and we therefore expect full consultation, especially over the spending of the generous sum which the Emergency Relief Coordinator Sir John Holmes has granted for the benefit of our suffering citizenry.” Mr. Wijesinha said the government looks forward to the partnerships which they believe the United Nations system is all about which ensures that the people, so long the victims of terrorism, so long prevented from returning to their homes, will derive maximum benefit from the generosity of the United Nations, and the people all over the world whom it represents. Mr. Wijesinha also said Sri Lanka wishes to place on record its appreciation of UNHCR support for the government in its efforts to alleviate the situation of the internally displaced, and to provide them with durable solutions. “As you are aware, when we requested others to leave the Wanni, where the LTTE then held full sway, UNHCR was one of the two UN agencies we wanted to remain, along with the World Food Programme, and in addition to the ICRC, because the humanitarian work they were doing was so important that they could have avoided falling prey to the LTTE. Unfortunately, the UN family decided to withdraw everyone, but UNHCR has since been helping us with our Welfare Villages, from the days when only a few thousand people were able to get away from the LTTE. In this connection we must pay particular tribute to the Confidence Building and Stabilization Measures Project that UNHCR initiated a year or so back, which has done much to provide relief and opportunities for self help to our fellow citizens who had suffered so much,” he said. Courtesy: Dailymirror.lk