
We totally reject unjust proposals for 'international monitors' and 'UN field presence': DSG Kodagoda

Wednesday, 25 March 2009

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In a right of Reply exercised by Sri Lanka during the afternoon session on 25 March 2009 at the 10th Session of the Human Rights Council, Mr. Yasantha Kodagoda, Deputy Solicitor-General, Attorney-General's Department made the following statement:

"Mr. President, I am compelled to intervene at this debate, upon a consideration of the gravity of the views expressed by the distinguished delegate representing the United States of America, suggesting that Sri Lanka agrees to the establishment of a full-fledged Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We are conscious that, this proposal is being made in the backdrop of the existing security situation in Sri Lanka. It is unfortunate that a world power that has faced the brunt of international terrorism and a world power that continues to advocate the elimination of terrorism through lawful exercise of force as opposed to mere diplomatic negotiations, continues to show lack of sensitiveness and empathy regarding the current situation that prevails in Sri Lanka and challenges faced by our government. Particularly in view of the possibility that some of you may have already forgotten ground realities faced by my country, Mr. President, let me remind this august Assembly that, Sri Lanka is engaged in a lawful internal exercise aimed at preserving and protecting its own territorial integrity and sovereignty from terrorism perpetrated by a ruthless, internationally known terrorist outfit. Military power being lawfully applied to eliminate LTTE terrorism from Sri Lanka is being effected by our security forces in accordance with international norms and standards pertaining to the conduct of internal armed conflicts. As the Head of our Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, Dr. Dayan Jayatilleka has frequently explained to you that our security forces are acting in a professional manner, and are diligently and efficiently discharging their duties, whilst maintaining a policy of zero civilian casualties. In fact, it is the pursuance of this policy, which has made the elimination of terrorism rather slow. It is our concern regarding the security and well-being of our own people, which has made the progression of gaining territory from the clutches of the LTTE slow. However, our forces are proceeding well according to a plan; A plan which my government will not change, due to utterances by insensitive agents who appear to possess a hidden agendas. With those who are genuinely concerned, we assure you that, we will continue to share information regarding the evolving situation in Sri Lanka and take into serious consideration concerns they may genuinely have. Mr. President, the armed conflict in Sri Lanka does not take place behind 'closed doors'. It is not 'a war without witnesses'. The ICRC and the UNHCR is present in Sri Lanka and have access to conflict areas and to areas in which the Internally Displaced Persons currently stay. Does not that show our policy of transparency? In this backdrop, we see no need for additional presence of 'international monitors' or for the establishment of a 'field presence of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights'. We reject in its totality any such proposal, which is totally unjustified, ill-conceived and made with ulterior motives. Such a move will be resisted by our government. We are also conscious that we have numerous friends in the international community who will in good faith rally behind us in support of our stand against unfair, inappropriate and unlawful interference in our internal affairs. To those in the international community who are genuinely concerned about the plight of innocent civilians trapped and kept hostage by the LTTE thus endangering their lives, I urge you to apply whatever diplomatic strategy you may possess, either directly on the LTTE or on the agents and lobbyists of the LTTE living in western cities, to permit civilians to leave the No Fire Zone and enter liberated areas, so that they could be protected and looked after by the government machinery. That would, Mr. President, be the only effective way of ensuring the security and well-being of the civilian population who are being kept inside the No Fire Zone against their will by the LTTE. It is inside the same zone that the LTTE has positioned their long range weapons and is launching attacks on the advancing security forces. Under international laws and norms regulating internal armed conflicts, how does the international community expect the security forces to act under such circumstances? Permit me Mr. President, to plead with those present at the Human Rights Council, not to view LTTE terrorists who endanger Sri Lanka's security, territorial integrity and sovereignty to be less dangerous than those terrorists who endanger and threaten the security of your respective States. May I also add that, those of you who adopt certain effective strategies to thwart and eliminate terrorism from your respective countries, should permit and encourage Sri Lanka to also effect such effective strategies to eliminate LTTE terrorism from Sri Lanka. Thank you."