# Sri Lanka Responds to NGOs

Wednesday, 23 September 2009
Last Updated Wednesday, 23 September 2009

Right of Reply exercised by Prof Rajiva Wijesinha Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights to issues raised under Item 4 of the Agenda of the Human Rights Council: Human rights situations that require the Council’s attention Sri Lanka regrets the disinformation purveyed by some Non-Governmental Organizations in the course of the debate on Item 4 of the Agenda of the Human Rights Council. Sadly we seem to have abandoned traditional values, or rather Christian values and the Ten Commandments, but the Prophet Moses would surely have spanked, if only metaphorically, those organizations that persistently bear False Witness as part of their relentlessly vindictive campaign against the Sri Lankan State.

To deal with just a few areas of disinformation, we are sorry that there are so many allegations of violations of international law, with no specific details. Sri Lanka is committed to investigating any credible, nay any plausible, allegations, but if the only thing those who persist in criticizing us have come up with, over nine long months, is the Channel 4 video, it seems clear that we can take pride in the record of our armed forces. That video seems to have taken in only Prof Philip Alston, which suggests that our forces have done better throughout than many others who have combated terror. In this context we welcome the assurance of the Swedish delegation that they will provide us with the reasons for their claim – on behalf of so many countries – of allegations of ill-treatment by government forces of women and children in the welfare centres. It is odd but not surprising that such allegations should have reached Scandinavia, when my Ministry, which is responsible for Protection issues, has been told that there seems to have been no basis even for such allegations by United Nations agencies and those Non-Governmental Organizations they have sub-contracted at great cost to look after such matters with funds kindly donated for the benefit of our citizens. Needless to say, these are issues we monitor, and lead on in suggesting mechanisms for ensuring better psycho-social support for the vulnerable. Again, we find strange the allegation that humanitarian assistance to the camps is restricted. Last evening I was going through the various projects funded by the Common Humanitarian Action Plan, and there is no shortage of agencies working in the camps. However we could not permit unlimited access after there was evidence of vehicles taking people surreptitiously out of the camps. We have agreed on guidelines for access based on security as well as other considerations, and meanwhile we are trying to ensure greater accountability and effectiveness with regard to the funds so generously donated. Shortcomings with regard to toilet facilities etc have been pointed out, and we owe it to our people to make sure that they receive the best possible facilities for the funding available. Finally, in discussion of the case of Mr Tissainayagam, it has been suggested that this is only about freedom of expression. It is regrettable that there is no recognition of the fact that he accepted funding from a terrorist movement. In his confession it is suggested that he tried to resist this, and only accepted funding under pressure but, while this may be a mitigatory factor, such financial involvement with terror cannot be ignored. Since the case is still under review I cannot comment further, but it should be noted that, for several years, there was constant provision of funds from Western donors for anti-government websites etc including those of the Tigers. This may have been provided initially in good faith, when it was hoped that the terrorists would change to democratic practices, but when that did not happen there should have been greater circumspection. At least now there should be remorse for support for information networks that promoted suicide killings from which our country suffered so much. Such factors cannot be forgotten, Mr President, as we strive to recover from the terrorism that beset us, and build a better more inclusive future. 22 September 2009