
Sri Lanka: Ambassador Dr. Jayatilleka commended at HRC's Universal Periodic Review of Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka's human rights situation came under review on 13th May 2008 within the framework of the second session of the Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which is now being held in Geneva and which report on Sri Lanka will be adopted this evening at Palais des Nations.

During the review, Sri Lanka was praised by many member countries on its achievements in different areas of human rights. Many speakers acknowledged the difficulties Sri Lanka has been going through (war, financial difficulties, etc.) and admired the progress the country has nevertheless achieved and maintained in several key areas of development, i.e. education and health. Following the presentation of Sri Lanka's national report at the beginning of the review, Member states engaged in an interactive dialogue with the Sri Lankan delegation led by Hon. Mahinda Samarasinghe, Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights. Sri Lankan Ambassador/ Permanent Representative H.E. Dr. Dayan Jayatilleka. A number of delegations also made positive comments about the Sri Lankan representation in Geneva, particularly the role which the Sri Lankan Ambassador/ Permanent Representative H.E. Dr. Dayan Jayatilleka plays within the UN Human Rights Council. Given below are excerpts of the statements made by a few countries:

-“Sri Lankan delegation has taken active parts in the work of the human rights council and its ambassador has played a constructive role for which we would like to express our admiration …” (China) -“Sri Lanka is a founder member of the Human Rights council. It was elected with the support of the majority of the member states of the United Nations (…) We’ve all witnessed the role played by Sri Lanka in the institution building in the council, and friend and colleague, Ambassador Dayan, in his capacity as Coordinator for the Asian Group, initially and present, Vice President of the council…” (Cuba) -“Sri Lankan Mission in Geneva led by their able Permanent Representative has also played a leadership role in its capacities as Coordinator of the Asian Group and Vice Chair of this Council in promoting human rights tenders and in the interest of the developing countries… “(Pakistan) “Ambassador Dayan is one of the stars of UN bodies including the Human Rights Council, who commands respect and admiration…” (Palestine) -“Sri Lanka, through its permanent Mission in Geneva led by His Excellency Mr. Dayan Jayatilleka plays an active role within the Human Rights Council, a role that has been reflected as presidency of the Asian Group in the crucial establishment of various bodies for the Council and as the Vice-Chairman of the Council as well… “(Morocco) -“…. Would like to pay a particular tribute to the Ambassador for his active participation in the Human Rights Council… “(Tunisia) -“We also note and appreciate the contributions made to the construction of the Human rights Council by Sri Lanka as the Coordinator of the Asian Group and also as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Council …” (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) -“…We commend the role played by Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative in the Human Rights Council…” (Algeria)

Dr. Jayatilleka, who was a member of the Sri Lankan delegation, also intervened to explain the 13th amendment, the power-sharing package proposed by the Sri Lankan government. Given below is his statement: “Mr President, as the Christian Science Monitor noted a few days ago, the government of Sri Lanka believes not only in a military solution but a political solution to the Sri Lankan conflict. The political component of this is the maximum devolution of power within a unitary framework. The 13th Amendment which issued from the Indo-Sri Lanka accord strives precisely to achieve provincial autonomy. We were unable to implement that fully for 20 years because the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam conducted a war in the Northern and Eastern provinces. Well, having militarily liberated the Eastern province, we have just concluded the holding of elections which has re-empowered the Eastern Provincial Council. An eminent group of 17 Asian election monitors has validated the election as free and fair. We intend to do the same in the Northern Province. The President of Sri Lanka has promised that the North, just like the East, will be militarily liberated and politically empowered by the holding of elections to an autonomous Provincial Council in the North. Meanwhile the president has appointed a high level National Task Force for the Northern Province which will implement the programme of reconstruction and rehabilitation. So we are attempting to revive, restore and re-activate the 13th Amendment which provides for full devolution of powers within a unitary state. Thank you.”