
Sri Lanka Side Event during 18th Session of the Human Rights Council

Thursday, 15 September 2011

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Sri Lanka Strongly Refutes Allegations of Channel 04 and Provides Succinct Analysis of Post-Conflict Development at Human Rights Council Side Event in Geneva“Sri Lanka should be given the time and space required to complete the LLRC process, and the international community must take due cognizance of significant progress achieved by Sri Lanka in rehabilitation and resettlement of IDPs, economic development of the North and the East, demining activities and in the reconciliation process”, observed Hon. Mahinda Samarasinghe, Minister of Plantation Industries and Special Envoy of the President on Human Rights, who led the Sri Lanka delegation to the 18th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC). Minister Samarasinghe made the above observations as the Chair at a side event titled “Sri Lanka - Humanitarian Operation: A Factual Analysis”, organized on the margins of the HRC in Geneva by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in Geneva on Monday 12 September.

The Sri Lanka delegation at the side event provided a succinct analysis of the post-conflict developments in the country, and briefed participants on progress in the legislative front such as the termination of emergency regulations and the adoption of the National Action Plan for Human Rights by the Cabinet of Ministers. The film “Lies Agreed Upon” refuting the allegations leveled against the Sri Lanka Government in the Channel 4 film entitled “Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields” and highlighting its inaccuracies and inconsistencies was also shown. The President of the Maldives H.E. Mohamed Nasheed speaking at the event urged the support of the international community for the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka. He noted that all Sri Lankans were affected by the conflict, and strongly welcomed the efforts made by the Sri Lanka Government towards speedy resettlement and rehabilitation of communities and towards development of the conflict-affected areas following the onset of peace. Briefing the attendees on the termination of emergency regulations promulgated under the Public Security Ordinance in 2005, the former Attorney General and Senior Advisor to the Cabinet of Ministers Mohan Pieris noted that the said regulations were implemented in the past to deal with an extraordinary situation related to the need to protect the country and its people from terrorist forces. He further observed that the emergency regulations have presently been terminated in their entirety given the incremental process of normalisation in the country. He said that as early as May 2010, the Sri Lanka Government reduced the scope of the Emergency Regulations in keeping with improvements in the ground situation. The Sri Lanka delegation strongly refuted the assertion by Amnesty International that the LLRC was not mandated for accountability. Responding to Amnesty International on their recently released report critiquing the LLRC, Mr. Pieris noted that any critique and “pre-judgement of the process before its completion is superfluous and unacceptable”. He elaborated on the “broad mandate” accorded to the LLRC, structured on the concept of restorative justice. Several developing countries endorsed the above position. They noted that Sri Lanka’s domestic reconciliation process should be supported by the international community and no action including pre-judgement of the process, should be undertaken by any party or parties prior to completion of the LLRC’s mandate. They also commended Sri Lanka for the humanitarian operation conducted to protect civilians from terrorism, and remarked upon the significant progress in resettlement and rehabilitation achieved in the aftermath of the conflict. Government Agent /Jaffna Ms. Imelda Sukumar in responding to queries on the situation in Jaffna elaborated on the resettlement of people including in the former High Security Zones, progress with regard to demining and restoration of livelihoods of the people including in the fisheries sector. She also referred to the rapid return to normalcy of the Jaffna district. Following the broadcast of the “Lies Agreed Upon” video, participants acknowledged that events can be presented in different ways and may not necessarily be true. A cross section of member countries of the Human Rights Council, INGOs and civil society organizations participated in the side event. They appreciated the opportunity provided for a very frank exchange of views on developments in Sri Lanka, and expressed the hope that further briefings may be provided via similar events organized on the sidelines of the forthcoming sessions of the HRC. The participants were given copies of information material on Sri Lanka including copies of the “Lies Agreed Upon” DVD, the publications entitled “Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis July 2006 – May 2009” and “Sri Lanka: The Emerging Wonder of Asia” published by the Ministries of Defence and Economic Development respectively, as well as material produced by the Ministry of External Affairs, at the Forum. They were also directed to the relevant websites with regard to information available in the public domain on the LLRC process, and other legislative enactments. The other members of the Sri Lanka delegation comprised Minister of Irrigation & Water Resources Management, Hon. Nimal Siripala de Silva; Minister of Environment, Hon. Anura Priyadarshana Yapa; Monitoring MP/External Affairs, Hon. Sajin de Vass Gunawardena; Sri Lanka’s Permanent Representative /Ambassador to the UN Tamara Kunanayakam; Senior Advisor to the Cabinet of Ministers Mohan Pieris; Secretary/Presidential Task Force for Resettlement, Development and Security for the Northern Province Mr. S.B. Divaratna; Government Agent/Jaffna Ms. Imelda Sukumar; and Addl. Government Analyst Mr. W.D.G.D. Gunatilleke. Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations Geneva 15 September 2011