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# STATEMENT BY PROFESSOR G.L. PEIRIS, MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Thursday, 22 March 2012

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It is a matter of great satisfaction to us that 15 countries voted with Sri Lanka, despite the intensity of pressure, in a variety of forms, exerted on them all. We convey to them our warm thanks and deep appreciation. We also thank sincerely the 8 countries which, by abstaining, declined to support the Resolution. With 15 countries voting with Sri Lanka, and 8 countries abstaining, the final result was that 23 countries, out of a total of 47 members of the Human Rights Council, did not support the Resolution, while 24 supported it. The margin was as narrow as this.

The most distressing feature of this experience is the obvious reality that voting at the Human Rights Council is now determined not by the merits of a particular issue but by strategic alliances and domestic political issues in other countries which have nothing to do with the subject matter of a Resolution or the best interests of the country to which the Resolution relates. This is a cynical negation of the purposes for which the Human Rights Council was established. Many countries which voted with Sri Lanka were acutely conscious of the danger of setting a precedent which enables ad hoc intervention by powerful countries in the internal affairs of other nations. This is a highly selective and arbitrary process not governed by objective norms or criteria of any kind. The implications of this were not lost on many countries. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, our policy in respect of all matters will continue to be guided by the vital interests and wellbeing of the people of our country. It hardly requires emphasis that this cannot yield place to any other consideration.

Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations

Geneva 22 March 2012