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# Ambassador Aryasinha delivers Sri Lanka National Statement at the 21st Session of the HRC

Monday, 10 September 2012

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Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha has said, the international community, especially those countries that have faced the challenge of emerging from protracted conflict or continue to be embroiled in such conflict, would particularly appreciate the significance of Sri Lanka's achievements since the ending of terrorism a little over 3 years ago. Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva and Leader of the Sri Lanka Delegation to the 21st session of the Human Rights Council made these observation, delivering the country statement on the opening day of the session in Geneva on Monday (10 Sept 2012). The session opened with an address by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Full statement.....

Statement by H.E. Ravinatha P. Aryasinha, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka and Leader of the Sri Lanka Delegation to the 21st HRC - 10 September 2012 Madam President, My delegation takes note of the High Commissioner's statement. Sri Lanka is firmly committed to maintaining the independence of the OHCHR, and supports the High Commissioner in her efforts to fulfil her mandate as contained in GA resolution 48/141. Towards this end, we see constructive engagement by states aimed at increasing transparency in funding and staffing of the OHCHR, as a means of enhancing the institution's credibility, efficiency and independence. We also encourage special procedures to vigilantly and vigorously observe the provisions as delineated in HRC Resolution 5/2 and the Code of Conduct as annexed, in the execution of their respective mandates, through a professional and impartial assessment of facts, to maintain credibility. For the effective and independent functioning of the OHCHR and the special procedures mandate holders, it is imperative that the majority of funding be derived from the OHCHR regular budget. In keeping with Sri Lanka's policy of continuous engagement with the UN System, I wish to avail of this opportunity to provide you an update on the significant steps taken, since the Council last met in June 2012, to consolidate our hard won peace following the defeat of terrorism, and to ensure rapid development and reconciliation amongst our people. Of the 295,873 IDPs in May 2009, the number that remains to be re-settled has reduced to 3,054. Of the 2061.53 sq.km. contaminated with landmines and UXOs, less than 116 sq.km. remain to be cleared. Of the approximately 12,000 ex-LTTE combatants who surrendered, only 1,034 remain to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. The former high security zones have ceased to exist. The military is no longer involved in civil administration in the Northern and the Eastern provinces. The Security Forces presence in the Jaffna peninsula has been reduced from 50,000 at the height of the conflict, to 15,000 at present. Following on a growth rate of 22 per cent in 2010, the Northern province in 2011 once again recorded the highest growth rate among all provinces, of 27.1 per cent, and continued to increase its share of the national economy driven by an expansion in agriculture, fishing, construction, transportation and financial services. The Trilingual Policy announced by the Government in January 2012 to further expand the Official Languages Policy is being implemented vigorously. Sri Lanka's democratic credentials were yet again re-asserted 2 days ago with the successful conduct of Provincial Council elections, including in the previously conflict affected Eastern Province. The ruling coalition UPFA returned the highest number of seats in all three Provincial Councils that went to the polls - a clear endorsement by the Sri Lankan people of the policies of the government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa which has sought to meet the aspirations of all communities in the reconciliation process. Further, in addition to completing the translation of the LLRC Report into the two official languages, Sinhala and Tamil, the Government in July 2012 also released its strategy for implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) in November 2011. It has been clustered under the sub-themes of international humanitarian law issues - inclusive of those concerning accountability, human rights, land return and resettlement, restitution/compensatory relief and reconciliation - on which multi-party consensus with respect to constitutional changes is to be carried out through the Parliamentary Select Committee established by the Government. This National Plan of Action not only identifies the activity aimed at operationalising the recommendations of the LLRC, but also goes on to earmark the key responsible agency, key performance indicators, and most significantly, sets strict time frames within which to complete the action. With significant synergies with the National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, some sections of the LLRC Action Plan are already at an advanced stage of implementation under the direction of an 8 member Task Force headed by the Secretary to the President. Financial allocations to complete the implementation of this plan has already been earmarked in the forthcoming budget. The international community, especially those countries that have faced the challenge of emerging from protracted conflict or continue to be embroiled in such conflict would particularly appreciate the significance of these achievements. Sri Lanka also welcomes the engagement it has been able to maintain with the High Commissioner and her Office, and looks forward to receiving in Sri Lanka later this week a team of officials from the OHCHR, to prepare the ground for a visit by the High Commissioner, in furtherance of the invitation extended to her in April 2011. It is hoped that this visit will help the OHCHR gain appreciation of the significant strides made by Sri Lanka in evolving a home grown process of reconciliation, in what has been a period of a little over three years since the guns fell silent. We hope that this visit would also help consolidate the trust in the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, which have come to be viewed with circumspection by the people of Sri Lanka. In fulfillment of its international obligations of engagement with the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, last month Sri Lanka also submitted its National Report for consideration at the forthcoming 14th session of the Universal Periodic Review scheduled to take place in November 2012. Sri Lanka has always maintained that the UPR mechanism is the appropriate forum to address the human rights situation of all countries in an uniform and respectful spirit of engagement, and therefore looks forward to a constructive dialogue at the forthcoming UPR of Sri Lanka. I thank

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