
Sri Lanka at ID on 'Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-recurrence' and 'Children and Armed Conflict'

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Sri Lanka Participates in HRC Interactive Dialogues on 'Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-recurrence' and 'Children and Armed Conflict' The Sri Lanka Delegation to the 21st Session of the Human Rights Council which opened in Geneva earlier this week is continuing to engage with the relevant Interactive Dialogues with Special Procedures Mandate Holders and Working Groups. Intervening in the Interactive Dialogue on the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-recurrence, on Wednesday (12 September) Senior Legal Advisor to the Cabinet Mr. Mohan Peiris observed that Sri Lanka has developed its home-grown transitional justice process with the establishment of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission, based on the principle of restorative justice, to advise on the measures which may be required to achieve national healing, cohesion and unity. In formulating the LLRC, Sri Lanka reflected on comparative transitional justice experiences in other countries. The Government of Sri Lanka has undertaken a harmonious and holistic approach to reconciliation, taking into consideration a range of cross-cutting issues including resettlement of IDPs, reconstruction of housing, resolution of land issues, rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants including former child soldiers, democratization, issues of accountability, demilitarization, demining, infrastructure development, livelihood development, education and vocational training, trauma and psycho-social counseling, support to female-headed households and women widowed due to the conflict, effective implementation of the national languages policy, etc. A victim-centric approach has been adopted in the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child combatants. Attention is also paid to encourage the constructive and productive engagement of the diaspora in the country's reconciliation process, in accordance with the development policy framework of the Government, and aspirations of the Sri Lankan people. He added that, Sri Lanka has consistently upheld the position that sufficient attention needs to be paid to economic, social and cultural rights when addressing post-conflict situations. The Sri Lankan Government, in the three years since the end of the conflict, has devoted much attention to the socioeconomic development of the former conflict-affected areas in the Northern and the Eastern provinces. The Government has, for the period 2009 to 2011, spent a total of Rupees 145.6 Billion on post-conflict development work in the North and the East, and the Northern Province in 2011 continued to increase its share of the national economy by recording the highest GDP growth rate, of 27.1 per cent, among all provinces. Participating on Tuesday in the Interactive dialogue on the Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Peiris observed that, having undergone an internecine conflict which lasted nearly three decades, in which thousands of children were forcibly conscripted to fight by the terrorist group, Sri Lanka is especially sensitive to the psychological as well as socio-economic contours of the rehabilitation of children in armed conflict. Following the end of the conflict, the Government's reconciliation programme has paid special attention to the rehabilitation of the former child combatants who had surrendered. He said of the approximately 12,000 ex-combatants, there were 594 LTTE child soldiers, who were rehabilitated and returned to their families within one year. Describing Sri Lanka's experience 'as a story that we could be proud of', the Senior Legal Advisor said the Government adhered to the policy of treating all child combatants as victims and not as perpetrators. Mr. Peiris also noted that Sri Lanka has been delisted by the Secretary-General from Annex II of the Security Council Resolution 1612, on Children and Armed Conflict, and said positive observations had been made by the President and members of the UNICEF Executive Board upon concluding an assessment Mission to Sri Lanka early this year, where they acknowledged the 'rapid strides' made by the country since the end of the conflict, and that 'there are lessons to be learnt here'. The 21st Session of the Council will continue until 28th September, 2012. Sri Lanka Permanent Mission Geneva 12 September 2012