
Sri Lanka shares its poverty eradication experience at the 21st Session of the HRC

Saturday, 15 September 2012

Last Updated Wednesday, 19 September 2012

The Sri Lanka Delegation to the 21st Session of the Human Rights Council, intervening in the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on 'Extreme Poverty', has emphasized that States and economic actors must take concerted efforts to address extreme poverty and create an enabling environment for sustainable economic development, which is accessible to all. Noting that Sri Lanka considers the Draft Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights as a tool, which can lead to developing and shaping measures and activities needed to eradicate extreme poverty across the world, the delegation called for strong political will and a multi-pronged and multi-dimensional approach at all levels to make the eradication of extreme poverty a reality.

Noting that Sri Lanka has long recognised the importance of conducive policies towards poverty reduction and sustainable growth, the Sri Lanka Government's current development framework – 'Mahinda Chintana: The Way Forward' – has developed a strategy to stimulate economic growth and ensure its even distribution. The Government anticipated that the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving poverty in Sri Lanka will be achieved well ahead of 2015. The proportion of people living below the national poverty line has declined from 26.1% in 1990, to 15.2% in 2006/7, and to 8.9% in 2009/10. Within the Mahinda Chintana, the 'Divi Neguma', the sustainable livelihood programme seeks to empower households through the establishment of one million domestic economic units. As a result, Sri Lanka has witnessed a marked improvement in nutritional levels of beneficiaries through food security, generation of additional income and economically empowered family units. The Government in 2011 spent approximately Rs 20 Billion on this programme. It is envisaged to expand this programme to target 2.1 million households in the next phase. This programme in turn has fed into the 'Gama Neguma', or the empowered villages programme, which targets on improving or provision of access to electricity, water, sanitation and other essential services, including health and education. Further, the 'Pura Neguma' programme clusters such empowered villages into developed townships, regional growth centres propelling Sri Lanka as an emerging economy focusing on environmentally friendly industry, private sector development and the development of tourism based economic activity. Participating in the clustered interactive dialogues with independent experts on 'international solidarity' and 'democratic and equitable international order', the Sri Lanka delegation noted that in an era of globalization, international solidarity is fundamental to achieving a peaceful and secure future for all. Sri Lanka concurred with the view that effective international solidarity must be based on shared responsibility, mutual respect, cooperation and respect for national sovereignty and the principle of non-interference. It was noted that following the onset of peace, the Sri Lankan government is determined to create a country of widespread prosperity which will be the bedrock of a lasting peace and that Sri Lanka's sincere efforts at reconciliation based on a home-grown process can be further consolidated by the goodwill of the international community. Sri Lanka counted on international solidarity at this juncture to achieve the development targets it has set for itself with an in-depth vision and understanding of the priorities and the aspirations of its people. Emphasizing that International solidarity cannot be confined to assistance or aid, but comprises a range of issues including sustainability in international relations, especially economic relations, peaceful coexistence, equal partnerships and the equitable sharing of benefit and burden, Sri Lanka concurred with the Independent Expert's view that a democratic international order requires greater transparency and respect for the needs and aspirations of peoples in all regions of the world, regardless of economic power or geo-strategic imperatives. Coercive tactics exercised by more powerful sections of the international community on smaller and economically weaker states does not contribute to the consolidation of international solidarity nor would it foster a democratic and equitable international order. Sri Lanka also underlined its concerns that the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use, poses an overarching threat to humanity and for the establishment of a democratic and equitable international order. Sri Lanka joined the collective voice for the elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals, taking into account the security interests of all States and on the basis of the principle of undiminished security for all. Sri Lanka Permanent Mission Geneva 14 September 2012