
Sri Lankan response to the International Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity

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Delivered by Prof Rajiva Wijesinha, Secretary General of the Peace Secretariat Sri Lanka is grateful to the experts who have presented the three reports under discussion which deal with important aspects of human rights. Sri Lanka had not initially intended to intervene, but the request of the independent expert on human rights and international solidarity for suggestions as to areas of concern coincided with a recent initiative of the Secretary General in New York, which perhaps needs further elaboration. I refer here to the question of terrorism, which is so destructive of human rights that it must surely be one of the most important fields for international solidarity. The expert referred to the problems of natural disasters, but it is equally important to think of man made disasters. The timely presentation by the Secretary General of victims of terrorism serves then to focus our attention on this issue too.

Three months ago, Mr President, during the Universal Periodic Review, Sri Lanka drew attention to the need for international cooperation to stop terrorist funding. Whilst we appreciate the efforts of several countries to control this, we have been told by others that funds for this purpose are limited, and there is concentration on particular forms of terrorism. Sadly the victims showcased recently with regard to terrorism seemed to confirm this misperception, ie that some forms of terrorism, depending perhaps on the status of victims, are worse than others. It is in such a context that it is vital to confirm the principle of international solidarity, the need for working together on the basis of principle, rather than cooperation that can be selective and sometimes even counter-productive. Working together against terrorism should not be a matter of geography or race or religion, it should be based on the principle of human solidarity. We believe therefore that statements that suggest that some terrorism is excusable, that some countries struggling against terrorism should be indulgent, should have no place in the United Nations. In today's terrifying context, where one successful act of terrorism can destroy so many and so much, it is a mistake for the United Nations or its constituent bodies to hold a spurious balance between terrorists and legitimate governments. Solidarity demands that, while the struggle for Human Rights should require the commitment of all States, corrosively destructive forces should not benefit from misplaced indulgence. We hope therefore that, not only the question of terrorist funding, but also that of what could be construed as indulgence to some terrorists, through forceful criticism of other terrorists, should be kept in view. We request the international expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity to address this issue too, and promote in dealing with such man made disasters a spirit, not just of cooperation, but of solidarity based on the principles on which the United Nations was founded,