

### **Item 3: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on countering terrorism**

#### **Oral Statement by Pasumai Thaayagam**

Mr. President,

Pasumai Thaayagam welcomes former Special Rapporteur Emmerson's report on Sri Lanka. And we thank Special Rapporteur Ní Aoláin for her report on the role of counterterrorism measures in closing civic space – a phenomenon seen in Sri Lanka.

The report on Sri Lanka highlights ongoing torture, detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (or PTA), and inertia in implementing Resolution 30/1. It describes “a pervasive ... stigmatization of the Tamil community” and the severe underrepresentation of Tamils in the security and judicial sectors. The report notes Sri Lanka's lack of political will in resolving terrorism cases, repealing the PTA, and adopting a new human rights-compliant counterterrorism law. The definition of “terrorism” in the proposed Counter-Terrorism Act to replace the PTA remains overly broad and vague.

Unfortunately, Sri Lanka rejected key findings and recommendations in its February response to Mr. Emmerson's report. Instead of focusing on reform, Sri Lanka said cases of torture should be referred to its Human Rights Commission. While in reality, the government promotes those credibly implicated in mass atrocities and torture. We strongly support Mr. Emmerson's call for security sector reform, including the removal of alleged human rights violators and the investigation and prosecution of torture allegations. Both vetting and punishment are necessary to prevent future abuses.

Sri Lanka also maintained in its response that there is “fair representation in all spheres of public service,” which we and Mr. Emmerson have found to be false. We would like to stress that the entrenched Sinhala supremacist, racist attitude towards other communities compounds this underrepresentation.

To conclude, we echo the recommendation that Sri Lanka fully implement Resolution 30/1. And we share Mr. Emmerson's warning that if Sri Lanka fails to do so, it could face other measures, including a Security Council referral. We urge Sri Lanka to fulfill its commitments – noting that an overhaul of the counterterrorism apparatus is necessary to protect human rights, particularly of Tamils. Finally, we request that the Special Rapporteur continue to critically engage with Sri Lanka.

Thank you.