



## **Time-bound implementation plan needed to hold Sri Lanka to its Commitments Item 2 interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's report on Sri Lanka**

Thank you Mr. President.

When the [Human Rights Council adopted resolution 30/1](#) by consensus in October 2015, Sri Lanka, through its co-sponsorship, committed to 25 key undertakings across a range of human rights issues. A core commitment was to set up four transitional justice mechanisms to promote “reconciliation, accountability and human rights” in the country. These included an accountability mechanism involving international judges, prosecutors, investigators, and defense lawyers; a truth and reconciliation mechanism; an office of missing persons; and an office for reparations.

While some positive steps have been taken by the government to date, both the current and former High Commissioners in their reports have expressed concern at the slow rate of progress.

Thus far only the Office of Missing Persons has been set up, but progress was delayed, and making the office operational was marred with logistical difficulties. There has been no discernible progress on establishing an accountability mechanism involving international judges, prosecutors, and investigators. Instead, Sri Lankan political leaders have repeatedly said that there will be no foreign judges, and that “war heroes” will be protected from prosecution.

Numerous UN experts and special mandates have since 2015 highlighted the marginalization and misrepresentation faced by minority communities, as well as a trust-deficit between these communities and the government, due in significant part to a culture of impunity. This was exposed during the recent political and constitutional crisis in Sri Lanka that laid bare the volatility of the political environment and the imperative need for continued international engagement to support the government in protecting human rights and promoting reform, reconciliation and accountability.

The Human Rights Council has played a vital role in identifying the many steps needed to reconcile with the past, ensure justice and accountability, and implement necessary reforms. Its scrutiny has proved an important catalyst for the progress made to date. As the High Commissioner's report underscores: “The lack of progress shows that the situation of human rights in Sri Lanka should remain firmly on the agenda of the Human Rights Council.”

Given the insufficient progress to date, and rising frustrations that any accountability process seems stalled, civil society, Special Procedures, the former and current High Commissioners, and even the resolution Core Group itself have underlined the need for a clear timetable and framework for Sri Lanka to fulfill its commitments. We are disappointed that the resolution tabled for consideration this session includes reference to a time-bound implementation plan as a preambular encouragement only. It is not too late to elevate this into an operative requirement.

Through this resolution, Sri Lanka is being given one more chance to deliver on its commitments, but it cannot credibly delay any further. Stronger measures are needed to assist in monitoring, implementing and fulfilling these commitments, such as an OHCHR field presence, Special Procedure and evidence-gathering, justice and accountability mechanisms.

Sri Lanka's long-term peace and stability hinges upon the international community's willingness to support the government in addressing the past so that it may look to the future.