

Closing Remarks by Sri Lanka
During the adoption of Sri Lanka's 4th Universal Periodic Review Report
10 July 2023

Mr President,

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates.

On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all Member States and civil society organisations for their constructive engagement, comments and recommendations, both during the review and the adoption of Sri Lanka's National Report under the 4th Cycle of the UPR.

2023 is the 75th anniversary year of Sri Lanka's independence, an important year for the country which coincides with the 75th anniversary of the UDHR and the 30th anniversary of the VDPA.

As we commemorate these significant milestones, it is important that we work towards the realization of universal human rights based on genuine dialogue and cooperation, devoid of politicisation, selectivity or discrimination. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated during the Review in February, the Government is keen to use this opportunity as a catalyst for realistic assessment of our challenges, to learn from the past and to build better and stronger in moving forward.

The Universal Periodic Review provides an effective and constructive mechanism to foster international cooperation. It facilitates genuine dialogue to domestically fulfill human rights obligations that have been voluntarily undertaken by Member States.

As a peer-review process it enables the sharing of good practices by UN Member States and allows countries to self-evaluate and improve on their domestic processes and policies in a non-confrontational positive atmosphere.

We accept that the primary responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms rests with the State concerned. States undertake this responsibility in accordance with their national policies, cultural norms and constitutional framework.

Sri Lanka attaches equal value to all human rights, be they civil, political economic, social or cultural. We are firmly of the view that the right to development is equally important and that the necessary support and assistance must be given to address their legitimate development priorities, while ensuring the protection of human rights.

In this context, the Government is taking efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite the setbacks of the Covid-19 pandemic and economic challenges, Sri Lanka has made steady progress in this regard.

The Sustainable Development Council has issued guidelines to all ministries to identify nationally appropriate SDG targets in line with their respective mandates, taking into consideration the national context and circumstances.

In order to accelerate progress on SDG 16 - 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions', an inter-agency Steering Committee was established under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice focusing on four core areas: strengthening public security and law enforcement, corruption control, access to justice and public service delivery. The Committee is formulating a combined Action Plan to achieve SDG 16 targets through holistic and integrated strategies. These measures would contribute to the

achievement of the targets relating to prevention and control of crimes, as well as strengthening access to justice.

Being a climate vulnerable state, Sri Lanka takes issues of environment and climate change very seriously. The Global Climate Risk Index Report of 2021 ranked Sri Lanka 30th amongst countries most affected by extreme weather events in 2019. Sri Lanka is subjected to such climate devastations with merely 0.05% emission of carbon dioxide with a per capita ratio of 0.88, reflecting the transboundary nature of climate change impact.

The Government is cognizant of the importance of mainstreaming and incorporating climate considerations into national policies and plans of action in order to overcome climate challenges. The Government's policies in this regard will be implemented through the National Environmental Action Plan 2022-2030.

Sri Lanka has supported all recommendations received pertaining to human rights and environment.

Sri Lanka has adopted its first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), for the period 2023 – 2027 with the support of the Government of Japan and UN Women. The Plan adds to the country's legal and policy frameworks to protect and empower women in line with international commitments set out in the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 (2000). It also aims to strengthen coordination between stakeholders of the women, peace and security agenda.

Mr. President,

Participating in this UPR process provided us the opportunity to present to the Council Sri Lanka's steadfast commitment to ensuring the human rights of all Sri Lankans and the wide range of measures taken and continue to be taken in this regard.

We are sincerely thankful to the large number of delegations that participated at the review of Sri Lanka's National Report and submitted useful recommendations. We also thank the delegations that took the floor today. We value their constructive engagement and insights, and we have noted the comments of the civil society partners.

We are particularly thankful for the acknowledgement of positive steps taken by the Government of Sri Lanka and the appreciation of progress achieved since the last review in 2017. It was also heartening to hear the acknowledgement of the challenges Sri Lanka faces, and the constructive approaches recommended, going forward.

Let me also convey my sincere thanks to the members of the Troika during Sri Lanka's UPR process - Qatar, Algeria and the United Kingdom, the President of the Council and members of the Bureau, as well as the UPR Secretariat for their hard work and assistance throughout the review process and adoption.

As a beneficiary country Sri Lanka highly appreciates the UPR Voluntary Fund, which has enabled us to have additional human resources during the review.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka attaches great value to the constructive spirit of this review, and the opportunity it provided for dialogue and cooperation. The Government of Sri Lanka will work towards the timely implementation of the recommendations it has supported, including those undertaken during previous cycles.

Thank you.