



22nd Session of the HRC
Statement by Sri Lanka - Item 3
Clustered ID with the WG on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances
& the SR on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Mr. President,

My Delegation notes the Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (A/HRC/22/45). As indicated in our National Statement to the Council, Sri Lanka continues to maintain a close dialogue with the Working Group through regular interaction with a view to clarifying outstanding issues. My delegation is appreciative of the support we have continued to receive from the Working Group in this engagement, which is testimony to the seriousness with which the Government of Sri Lanka has considered all allegations of disappearances.

Sri Lanka has taken multiple initiatives to address these allegations. They include strengthening the State's institutional framework to deal with all aspects of disappearances; streamlining the mechanism of entertaining complaints; and putting in place measures to investigate disappearances in a timely manner. In addition, Sri Lanka has also strengthened its legal process. For example, the Registration of Deaths (Temporary Provisions) Act No 19 of 2010 has been introduced in order to enable next of kin (NOK)

to obtain a substantial degree of closure. This also facilitates the claiming of monies due to the NOK.

The Government has established an inter-agency Working Group comprising representatives of the Ministries of Defence, External Affairs and the Attorney General's Department, to clarify cases of alleged disappearances brought to its attention by the Working Group, and to take follow up action as deemed necessary, to bring finality to cases.

The Ministry of Defence has created a database to clarify cases referred by the Working Group. During the past year, the Government transmitted clarifications on 264 cases to the Working Group. It is noteworthy that eighty per cent of the cases under consideration date back to the pre-1990 period, and that in relation to more than 60 per cent of cases, no formal complaints have been lodged with the law enforcement authorities.

Mr. President,

My delegation also welcomes the opportunity to discuss the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (A/HRC/22/51).

Sri Lanka is home to a multi-ethnic, multi-religious community including those of the Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Islamic faiths. Freedom of religion including the freedom to have or to adopt a religion of choice for every person by way of a fundamental right is enshrined in Article 10 of Sri Lanka's Constitution as an entrenched provision.

The National Action Plan to implement the LLRC recommendations has made provision to address grievances of citizens, in particular minorities, and particularly those based on ethnicity or religion. This process through the introduction of measures or amendments to laws would strengthen citizens' rights and grievance mechanisms. This is being implemented by the Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General's Department and the Presidential Secretariat.

Building on the Circular issued in 2008, measures are underway to present a Bill for the approval of Parliament for appointing a Committee for the registration or construction of places of religious worship in the country. Until this Bill is presented to Parliament, approval for registration or construction of religious places is granted by a Committee headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs and including Directors representing Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic and Christian Religious and Cultural Affairs.

In conclusion Mr. President,

Sri Lanka reiterates its commitment to working closely with the Working Group and the Special Rapporteur in their efforts in executing their respective mandates.

I thank you.