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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by International Buddhist Relief Organisation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[6 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Responding to High Commissioner's Written Update on Sri Lanka

We reaffirm Sri Lanka's commitment to peace, prosperity, and reconciliation within the frameworks of its government. Since the Sri Lankan government's 2019 decision to withdraw from its co-sponsorship of UN Human Rights Council resolution 30/1, it has demonstrated a compelling capacity for fostering domestic initiatives aimed at sustaining and improving human rights and related developments.

The Sri Lankan government has taken these productive actions despite a period of tremendous pressure for the country. The impact of the global pandemic and the ensuing economic woes continue to plague the nation's growth, sapping vital income from tourism, trade and foreign employment. Sri Lanka continues to battle the trifecta of the pandemic, severe economic pressures and adverse international intrigue while making remarkable efforts in achieving reconciliation within its diverse communities.

The status of human rights in Sri Lanka following the defeat of the LTTE cannot be compared to other post-conflict situations anywhere else in the world. The purposeful misrepresentation of events that took place during the nearly three-decade-long war against LTTE tyranny stands in the way of Sri Lankan progress. This includes grossly inaccurate portrayals of civilian casualty counts and allegedly harmful military tactics. These claims have been repeatedly reviewed by multiple international attachés who found them to be untrue. While some nations mask their violations from the international eye while struggling with reconciliation and the safeguarding of human rights, Sri Lanka has taken transparent, effective, and sustainable action to combat these issues and has embraced cooperation when appropriate.

Reparations and Rehabilitation

The Sri Lankan government has taken on reparations in a twofold capacity and has continued to take decisive action since its 2019 decision to move towards a more holistic domestic approach. It has invested in sweeping national policies aimed at reconciliation and encouraged the actions of subsidiary bodies to foster change from the ground up.

Since the 48th UN Human Rights Council, initiatives like the Office of Reparation's Psychosocial Support Program and Monetary Compensation Identification efforts have bolstered the allocation of hundreds of millions of Rs. to those affected by the war in the Northern Province.

Massive rehabilitation and reconciliation efforts have taken place, especially targeting child soldiers involved in the separatist movement of the LTTE. These youth have been transformed through investments in their education and vocational training, with a special interest in preserving familial bonds where possible, reflecting the values of Sri Lankan society.

The Sri Lankan government has taken on a forward-thinking harmony-oriented approach to national unity and reconciliation, especially in recent years. A focus on the future generations of Sri Lanka has resonated with many social movements and bodies who have appreciated and endorsed these initiatives.

National Reform and Accountability

The Sri Lankan government has created an environment geared towards positive national reform in recent years. The government carefully reviews threats to the country's sovereignty by international bodies with vested interests. Such efforts are proactively thwarted with a view to protecting the country and its people, fostering peace and growth.

The Presidential Commission of Inquiry has begun a review process of the existing Commissions and Committees on violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. Additionally, a Bill proposed on the 27th of January 2022 listing

amendments to the Prevention of Terrorism Act seeks to address humanitarian issues regarding the handling of potential terrorist threats.

Sri Lankan officials continue to outline further plans for a “domestically designed and executed reconciliation and accountability process” through a Commission of Inquiry conducted under a Justice of the Supreme Court. Discussions surrounding the structuring of a review process of the alleged violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law are ongoing. Previous attempts over the past decade to establish this process lacked important national input. The final design of this new review process will benefit greatly from its domestic conception.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka has taken a progressive stand in the fight for human rights on an international scale, especially in its co-sponsorship of the 48/L.8 Negative impact of the legacies of colonialism on the enjoyment of human rights resolution.

Conclusion

The current administration of Sri Lanka has established efforts to bolster human rights with a holistic view, not truncating the country by geography or demographics but rather fostering a new and unified mindset for change.

London Initiative, Global Srilankan Forum UK, Global Srilankan Forum Excom, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

1. Statement from Foreign Minister Prof. G.L. Peiris at the 48th United Nations Human Rights Council