

**Human Rights Council - 25<sup>th</sup> session (3-28 March 2014)**

**Item 2 – OHCHR Report on ‘Promoting reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka’**

**Statement by Ireland**

**26 March 2014**

Mr. President,

Ireland aligns itself with the intervention made earlier on behalf of the European Union.

Madam High Commissioner,

Ireland thanks you for your most recent report on ‘Promoting reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka’, following your visit in August 2013.

In your report, you point to the significant progress achieved by the Government of Sri Lanka in some of the physical aspects of resettlement and recovery, and the implementation of some of the recommendations made by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC). We join you in welcoming the progress that has been made in this regard, including giving effect to the trilingual policy, promoting the official use of the Tamil language, the upgrading of schools and measures to promote diversity in, and equity of access to, education.

However, we also note with concern your observation that, in many instances, activities in the national plan of action do not correspond to or address the recommendations made by the LLRC or the activity has only been partially completed. In many other cases, recommendations made by the LLRC were not addressed at all in the national plan of action.

In its resolution 22/1, the HRC called upon the Government of Sri Lanka to conduct an independent and credible investigation into allegations of violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law and to take all necessary additional steps to fulfil its relevant legal obligations and commitments to ensure justice, equity, accountability and reconciliation for all Sri Lankans. We note your conclusion that the Government has taken limited and piecemeal steps towards investigating serious allegations of violations, and that none of these have had the independence or credibility required.

Madam High Commissioner,

In your report, you draw the conclusion that the failure of national mechanisms to establish the truth and achieve justice is fundamentally a question of political will and you express the view that an independent, international inquiry would play a positive role in eliciting new information and establishing truth where domestic inquiry mechanisms have failed. Ireland supports your views on this matter. As we have seen in other conflict situations around the world, including in my own country, reconciliation can only come about where there is respect for equality, justice and human rights. True reconciliation must be based on mutual

trust and partnership, on an ability to step into the shoes of the other and to view things from the other's perspective. We urge the Government of Sri Lanka to listen to the concerns of this Council and to accept fully the recommendations you have made, Madam High Commissioner, and to cooperate fully with your Office concerning the implementation of the resolution which is for action during this session.

While I have the floor, Mr. President, I also wish to join others in deploring the recent arrest, detention and harassment of Human Rights Defenders in Sri Lanka, coinciding with this session of the Council. We call upon the Government of Sri Lanka to take concrete steps to prevent and stop the use of legislation to hinder or limit unduly the ability of human rights defenders to exercise their work, including by reviewing and, where necessary, amending relevant legislation and its implementation.

Thank you, Mr. President.