



## **EXPLANATION OF VOTE ON THE RESOLUTION “PROMOTING RECONCILIATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN SRI LANKA”**

### **Item 2**

**1 OCTOBERB 2015**

Mr President

South Africa welcomes this resolution by consensus because by its adoption by consensus, it will signify a turning point in the relations between the Human Rights Council and the Government of Sri Lanka. This is indeed also a turning point for the people of Sri Lanka, particularly the victims of the civil war.

South Africa has always promoted the need for a peaceful, sustainable, long-term political solution, which will be achieved through broad consultations and an inclusive dialogue process amongst the people of Sri Lanka. In this respect, we have offered to share our experiences on finding a lasting political solution and to develop an organic model for truth telling, justice and reconciliation with the government in a non-prescriptive manner.

Mr President,

South Africa appreciates that the draft resolution before this Council recognises decisive steps the Government of Sri Lanka has taken in the nine months since it

took office, towards the process of reconciliation and addressing the domestic challenges of the justice and judicial systems. This is a fact also acknowledged by the OISL and the High Commissioner reports. South Africa commends the Government for the bold steps it has undertaken and the commitment it is showing towards the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

While there is recognition of the positive step taken, the High Commissioner's report also highlights the endemic violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law including the lack of credibility in Sri Lanka's domestic mechanism. South Africa believes that the establishment of a credible domestic mechanism on accountability, truth telling and reconciliation must be underpinned by sincere political dialogue process between all concerned parties, which includes the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim communities to bring about a lasting political solution and the achievement of sustainable peace for the people of Sri Lanka. The Tamil Diaspora remains an important constituency and its support is critical in fostering a real and meaningful dialogue.

In this respect, South Africa calls for an effective implementation of the constructive recommendations in the report including the return of private land, missing persons, torture and sexual and gender-based violence. We also call on the Government to fulfil its commitment to the devolution of political authority through the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution of Sri Lanka and the review of the Victim and Witness Protection Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act.

This is an opportunity for the people of Sri Lanka to resolutely progress towards reconciliation, peace, stability and nation building. These are dependent on credibly investigating the alleged violations of human rights to avoid no-recurrence.

In conclusion, Mr President, South Africa welcomes the collaborative spirit of the resolution between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Office of the High Commissioner, including with the special procedures and mandate holders. We encourage Sri Lanka to continue in this path for the good of its people cognisant of the challenges ahead and the delicate balance that the Government needs to maintain in its pursuit of a lasting peace in the country.

What the Government and the people of Sri Lanka need is support and nurturing by the international community as they embark on this difficult journey.

I thank you