

Obs 16



30th Session of the Human Rights Council

HC report on Sri Lanka followed by discussion

Delivered by Deputy-Permanent Representative ~~Carl Reaich~~

Jarrod Clune
30 September 2015

Mr President,

New Zealand would like to thank the High Commissioner for the report on Sri Lanka. New Zealand acknowledges the findings and recommendations identified in this report.

New Zealand would also like to recognise the efforts of the Sri Lankan Government over the past nine months to develop a reform programme designed to achieve meaningful reconciliation. We have appreciated the way in which Sri Lanka has engaged constructively with the international community, including through the Human Rights Council, over these issues.

2015 has been an important year in Sri Lanka's history. We were pleased to see that the Presidential and Parliamentary elections held this year were characterised by domestic and international observers as among the most free and fair in Sri Lanka's history. These robust electoral processes are a platform on which positive reconciliation outcomes can be built.

New Zealand welcomes the announcement by Foreign Minister Samaraweera here in Geneva that Sri Lanka will establish a Truth & Reconciliation Commission to help the country recover from its decades-long civil war, as part of a package of reforms.

New Zealand views the measures announced by Foreign Minister Samaraweera as a significant step towards genuine reconciliation and political devolution for Sri Lankans, something New Zealand has been encouraging for many years. The policies announced, such as establishing an office to assist people who lost family members in the civil war and negotiating a new Constitution that reflects Sri Lanka's ethnic and religious diversity, demonstrate a serious and constructive approach to resolving some of the most challenging issues facing Sri Lanka. We expect these measures will help reconciliation and devolution, particularly for Tamil communities in the North and East of the country.

The challenge for the international community, including the Office of the High Commissioner, is to assist the Sri Lankan Government and people in creating reconciliation and accountability mechanisms that are credible, effective and achievable, and allow the country to move forward.

We would like to ask the High Commissioner what practical steps he thinks the international community could take to assist Sri Lanka with this?