

UNICEF Statement

**Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Promoting
Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka**

Human Rights Council, Geneva, 30 September 2015

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr President,

Children bore the brunt of the war in Sri Lanka and of the atrocities committed by both sides. Children, and people who were children at the time of atrocities and violations, should be given ample voice in all processes proposed by the report and be supported in those processes as witnesses or claimants as if they were still children. And the families of children who were recruited, killed, maimed or otherwise had their rights violated should be supported in all these processes as special interest groups.

Children, and people who were children at the time, should be considered in all processes of restitution, truth telling and reconciliation, and those processes should actively reach out to hear from children and people who were children at the time (taking into consideration their particular vulnerabilities) and ensure that they too are considered for compensation and restitution.

The majority of the children, or people who were children at the time, who remain on active family tracing lists, were older teens who had been conscripted into the LTTE in the later part of the war. Families need to know what happened to their children and where they or their bodies are. Processes regarding incidents which might have led to any of those children being detained, separated from their communities or killed should address children's cases as a matter of priority.

Reconciliation processes recommended by the report must recognize the damage the conflict did to childhood in Sri Lanka, and all efforts need to be made to bring children into wider national discussions about the causes, injustices and impacts of the conflict, as a means to break the inter- and intra-generational transmission of suspicion and mistrust that still prevails in many cases. Children and adolescents should be engaged as agents of peace building, reconciliation and social cohesion, and every effort should be made to ensure their active participation in processes and dialogues which aim to create long term and lasting peace on the beautiful island of Sri Lanka.

Mr. President

UNICEF is encouraged by the commitment of the new government in Sri Lanka and stands ready to support it in efforts to realize the rights of children, and people who were children at the time, in the coming years in the processes of truth telling, reconciliation, non-reoccurrence and peace education and building.