

30 September 2015

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United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland

High Commissioner's Report on Sri Lanka - 30 September 2015

Thank you Mr President.

The UK strongly welcomes the report of the OHCHR investigation on Sri Lanka. We are grateful to the High Commissioner, his staff and all who contributed to it.

The report sets out a range of extremely grave human rights violations and abuses, committed by all sides in the conflict. While this account will be difficult for many in Sri Lanka, it was essential for the Council to have seen it and for the people of Sri Lanka. Without facts, there can be no justice, no end to impunity and no reconciliation. We therefore welcome the report's conclusions and recommendations. They provide an important basis for Sri Lanka and all those affected by the conflict and its aftermath to look to the future.

We are encouraged by the initial steps taken by the government since January towards accountability and reconciliation, to address the legacy of the conflict. Positive measures such as the replacement of military governors in the north and east with civilians, the return of land to a number of war-displaced families and a commitment to disengage the military from commercial activity will make an important difference.

We welcome the many comments made by Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Samaraweera in his opening address to this session: in particular, his government's plans for developing a process of reconciliation. Seeking the truth, ensuring justice providing reparations, and ensuring non-recurrence are essential. We are also pleased by his commitments on the National Human Rights Commission, national and international legal steps on Enforced Disappearances; and on maintaining the moratorium on the death penalty with a view to its ultimate abolition.

We warmly welcome the constructive approach that the government of Sri Lanka has taken during this session to agreeing a consensual resolution.

However, the UK recognises that this resolution is not an end in itself, but the start of a process that will require commitment from all parties if it is to deliver meaningful reconciliation and long-term peace and stability in Sri Lanka.

With this in mind, the UK reaffirms today its commitment to supporting all Sri Lankans in their efforts to overcome the legacy of the past and allowing the country to fulfil its huge potential. We urge others in this Council and the wider international community to join us in doing so.

Thank you.