

Statement by the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka at the 4th
Session of. the Human Rights Council Forum on Minority Issues
29-30 November 2011, Geneva

Madam Chairperson,

My delegation welcomes the unique opportunity provided by this Forum for engagement and dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society, on guaranteeing the rights of minority women.

Sri Lanka has a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural social fabric with the co-existence of Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher communities. The rights of all peoples are constitutionally safeguarded. With the defeat of terrorism and the onset of peace, the Government has paid special attention to the safeguarding of the rights of women, especially Tamil, and Muslim women, who were impacted by the conflict, and to ensuring their effective participation in economic, social and cultural life. The massive rehabilitation and resettlement drives mobilised by the Government have taken due note of the special needs of women and children and of vulnerable communities displaced and/ or affected by the conflict.

National livelihood development programmes such as 'Divi Neguma' specially focus on empowering and enhancing the livelihoods of women. Sri Lanka provides equal and free access to education to children of all communities. Girl children specially have benefitted from the national policy of the provision of free primary, secondary and higher education. The resulting high levels of attainment in education by women

have had a positive impact on their economic empowerment and on overall health indicators, and on women's participation in the labour market.

Madam Chair,

Despite achievements, we are mindful of the many challenges to creating an integrally pluralistic society, including the enhancement of women's participation in the political sphere. We repose confidence in the outcome of our domestic process of reconciliation, the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission, in further consolidating the hard won peace to the benefit of women and girl children of all communities.

In conclusion, Madam Chair,

My delegation commends the action taken by the Forum to ensure that the proceedings are carried to a successful conclusion in a manner befitting its high mandate. However, action such as the dissemination within the Forum of information that is anonymous and not attributable to any institution or party, and non-adherence to the guidelines set, are in violation of accepted norms and procedures, and should not be condoned.

It would only erode the credibility of the Forum. We urge that due care be exercised to prevent such occurrences in the future.

Madam Chair,

My delegation remains encouraged by the draft recommendations' outlined for consideration by the Forum in safeguarding the rights of minority women. I also

take this opportunity to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to the Independent Expert for organizing and skilfully guiding the deliberations.

Thank you.