



63rd Session of the Human Rights Council

Item 2: Written Update of OHCHR on the human rights situation in Sri Lanka

Statement by Sri Lanka as the country concerned

08 September 2026

Mr. President,

High Commissioner,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Sri Lanka takes note of the written update of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Sri Lanka, and appreciates the opportunity to present its observations to the Council.

At the outset, we reaffirm Sri Lanka's continued commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and advancing reconciliation and national unity.

Sri Lanka has consistently engaged with this Council and with the United Nations human rights mechanisms in a spirit of dialogue, transparency and cooperation. We have done so while making clear our established position that sustainable progress in human rights and reconciliation must be nationally owned, nationally driven and responsive to the aspirations and realities of the people of the country.

Mr. President,

This month marks two years since H.E. President Anura Kumara Dissanayaka was elected with a mandate for economic, social and political transformation. Despite significant challenges, including Cyclone Ditwah and global and regional uncertainties, the Government has made considerable progress towards building a just, fair and prosperous society. Throughout these challenges, Sri Lanka and its people have remained resilient and optimistic. Our economic recovery has gained international recognition, with Sri Lanka returning to upper-middle-income status and recording 5% real GDP growth in 2025. The Government remains firmly committed to inclusive growth, equal opportunities and supporting vulnerable communities, ensuring that no one is left behind.

On the governance front, the Government's strong anti-corruption drive under the Clean Sri Lanka program continues, with significant steps taken to enhance transparency, accountability and integrity within the public sector, including through the strengthening of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC), and launching of the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP) 2025–2029. Independent investigations and prosecutions have resulted in several landmark convictions, while recent public financial and debt management legislation further strengthens transparency and accountability.

At the same time, the Government remains committed to and continues to take proactive measures to uphold the rule of law, protect the rights of all Sri Lankans and promote national unity and reconciliation. This is in line with our belief that strengthening national unity and reconciliation is integral to the development of the country.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka did not support Resolution 60/1, including its provisions extending the mandate of the external evidence-gathering mechanism established within the OHCHR. We have consistently expressed serious reservations regarding external mechanisms of this nature as they only serve to create divisions, thereby jeopardising genuine and tangible national processes set in motion at domestic level. It is important that international engagement complements national efforts, rather than substituting them.

Without prejudice to our position on the resolution, we note the OHCHR's recognition of positive developments in Sri Lanka, including progress in investigations, anti-corruption measures and memorialisation.

In the past year, the Government has continued steadfastly with its agenda for reforms and promoting reconciliation and human rights.

- Following extensive consultations including input from the UN and international partners, the Prevention of Terrorism Act is to be repealed and replaced with a new legislation on Protection of the State from Terrorism. The new legislation, containing safeguards against abuse and guaranteeing fundamental freedoms, has been

approved by the Cabinet and is in the process of being gazetted before being presented to Parliament in the coming month.

- Stakeholder discussions were undertaken on the amendments to the Online Safety Act and the relevant amendments are currently being finalised.
- The independent reconciliation mechanisms comprising the Office of Missing Persons (OMP), the Office for Reparations (OR) and the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR) continue to discharge their respective mandates with strengthened human and financial resources.
- With the allocation Rs. 375 million for expediting inquiries into complaints regarding missing persons, the OMP has further strengthened its work and is expected to inquire into 10,000 more cases in the next two years. The OMP has also initiated discussions with international partners to receive forensics related capacity building. The OMP's regional presence facilitates direct engagement with families, while its online reporting and complaint-status facilities have further expanded public access to its services.
- The OR continues to implement a comprehensive approach extending beyond financial assistance to livelihood assistance, psychosocial support and community-based initiatives aimed at restoring the wellbeing and economic resilience of affected communities.
- The ONUR continues to strengthen its national and grassroots-level engagement. Its network comprises over 7,000 Coexistence

Societies across all 14,022 *Grama Niladhari* Divisions and 331 Divisional Secretariat areas.

- The existing draft framework for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is being reviewed with a view to avoiding overlaps with the mandates of other reconciliation mechanisms, to ensure optimum performance.
- A Committee headed by a Supreme Court Judge continues to study proposals relating to the establishment of an independent prosecutor's office as approved by the Cabinet.
- Land restitution remains an important component of the reconciliation process. The majority of lands previously utilised by security forces have now been returned. A special inter-ministerial committee has been appointed by the Cabinet to examine issues relating to the release of land, payment of land value and the provision of special compensation.
- Development initiatives in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, including the expansion of industrial activity, investment and employment opportunities, also form an important part of the Government's broader approach to reconciliation.
- Last month, the Cabinet approved special immigration measures to facilitate the voluntary and safe return of Sri Lankan refugees living in India who left Sri Lanka during the conflict without valid travel documents.
- The longstanding issues faced by the Malayaga community are being addressed expeditiously and comprehensively for the first time.

- As stated by Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka before this Council last September, the Government remains committed to ensuring that any person alleged to have committed any unlawful act is investigated, prosecuted and brought before courts through an independent national process, irrespective of their social status, background or any other ground. Action taken in the past two years demonstrates how this commitment has translated into action with regard to several high-profile cases. While investigating events that occurred many years ago presents genuine evidentiary and procedural challenges, these challenges do not diminish the Government's commitment, and steps have already been taken to re-open investigations into certain key cases.
- As acknowledged in the High Commissioner's written update, the Government has stayed fully committed and true to the pledge given by H.E. the President that we will leave no room whatsoever for a resurgence of racism or extremism in the country. Building a nation that respects and celebrates the diversity of its people remains a key priority for the Government.

Mr. President,

The Government reiterates its unequivocal commitment to safeguarding the independence, impartiality and integrity of the judiciary and upholding the rule of law, separation of powers and the right of every person to access to justice and a fair hearing. In this regard, it is stressed that the proposed legal reforms incorporating provisions on increasing the number of judges and the retirement age of all judges,

among others, are aimed at further strengthening the capacity and efficiency of the justice system by addressing case backlogs and delays, retaining judicial expertise and institutional knowledge, enhancing access to justice and facilitating the effective exercise of appellate jurisdiction at the regional level.

Mr. President,

The Government takes allegations of torture, deaths in custody and ill-treatment extremely seriously. We also recognize the challenges confronting our prison system, including overcrowding, resource constraints and the consequences of prolonged incarceration, particularly in relation to drug-related offences. Prison reforms have been work in progress for several years and the Government is looking at accelerated measures to improve prison administration, reduce overcrowding and strengthen rehabilitation. The tragic events at the Negombo Prison are currently subject to independent investigations and a Committee of Inquiry appointed by Secretary to the President, with Cabinet approval, is conducting a comprehensive investigation into the incidents.

In this regard, Sri Lanka is pleased to have facilitated the second country visit of the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture in June 2026, in the course of which unimpeded access was granted to the Sub Committee to places of detention in the country.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka's engagement with the United Nations human rights system in the past two years has been marked by consistent and constructive engagement.

In June 2025, we facilitated a productive visit to Sri Lanka by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In 2025 and 2026, we engaged constructively with several Treaty Bodies, including the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Sri Lanka also facilitated high-level visits by UN officials, including those of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, and the UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific.

On 17 August 2026, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee on Human Rights, which will serve as a national framework for monitoring, coordinating and reporting on Sri Lanka's international human rights obligations.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka has travelled a long and challenging road. The end of conflict brought with it not the end of challenges, but the beginning of a long process of healing, rebuilding and reconciliation. That process requires patience, courage and honesty. It requires us to acknowledge suffering, address legitimate grievances and strengthen institutions. It also requires recognition of progress where progress has been made, and understanding and encouragement.

As already explained, amidst multiple challenges, the Government remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthening independent institutions, addressing corruption, upholding the rule of law, protecting fundamental freedoms, strengthening the criminal justice system, and advancing national reconciliation.

We therefore respectfully urge that Sri Lanka's situation be assessed in a manner that is balanced, objective and constructive in keeping with the principles governing the Council, and that Sri Lanka be supported in its national efforts for a just, prosperous and reconciled nation.

Thank you.