

Civil society observations

Direct consultations on the draft National Report were organized in Colombo and Jaffna taking into consideration the sectoral and ethnic diversity of the country. CSOs participating in these pre-consultations, while welcoming the opportunity to engage with the GoSL, commented on the developments that had taken place regarding the country's overall human rights situation since the 3rd cycle of the UPR. CSOs made constructive recommendations and varied views were expressed regarding the phase of the progress and fulfilment of the commitments made by the GoSL.

Some of the key observations/priorities highlighted during the consultations were: (i) Strengthening safeguards to prevent torture, including a mechanism to assess psychological torture; (ii) Repealing the PTA and replacing it with a law conforming with international standards, or addressing charges on terrorism through the existing law; (iii) Ensuring that those convicted for offences punishable by death penalty are not arbitrarily granted pardon by the Executive, and articulate the right to life in the FR chapter of the Constitution; (iv) Addressing issues related to prison overcrowding; (v) Address regional disparities in access to health, water and sanitary, education, economic and social rights; (vi) Justiciable economic, social and cultural rights; (vii) Addressing corruption and mismanagement of public funds, (viii) Establishing a monitoring mechanism with broad participation, including CSOs for UPR implementation; (ix) Establishing a credible truth-seeking mechanism; (x) Effective implementation of the RTI; (xi) Ratifying the ILO's C190; (xii) Introducing national policies to address microfinance-induced household debts; (xiii) Awareness raising on human trafficking, publishing evidence-based data on human trafficking, and ensuring adequate funding; (xiv) Revisiting the proposed amendments to the VSSO and address concerns regarding the regulatory authority for CSOs, to ensure an enabling environment for Human Rights Defenders and NGOs;

The key observations were also extended to issues related to: (i) Private lands in the Northern Province being gazetted as forest lands and resettlement of persons from other regions; (ii) Increasing the number of Tamil speaking Police officers in the Northern Province; (iii) Drug-induced domestic violence; (iv) Enhancing facilities in the school system including pre-schools, addressing delays in examinations, school dropouts and preventing corporal punishment in schools; (v) Enhancing cultural and religious awareness and education; (vi) Improving access to free healthcare including services of specialized doctors

The key priorities related to specific groups were also extended to following issues: (i) Ensuring non-discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; (ii) Implementing a monitoring mechanism to review the progress on the economic, social and cultural rights of specific groups such as women, children, refugees, PwDs, upcountry plantation sector and LGBTIQ+ persons; (iii) Addressing issues on SGBV, cyber-SGBV, domestic violence, marital rape, harassment in the working place, expediting prosecutions and convictions in GBV and child abuse cases, and providing adequate relief including medical services for the victims (iv) Addressing challenges in implementing the Official Languages Policy; (v) Addressing

malnutrition, access to food, healthcare education, and mental health support for children; (vi) Ensuring social safety and welfare for vulnerable groups during the economic crisis; (vii) Effectively implementing the Policy on Durable Solutions for IDPs, returning refugees with regard to livelihoods, employment, the loss of documentation and expediting the release of private lands; (viii) Challenges in access to public services by PwDs, including banking, obtaining travel documents and motor vehicle license (ix) Daily wage gap between male and female workers.