



European Union

Colombo, 10 December 2013

LOCAL EU STATEMENT ON WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY – 10 DECEMBER

The European Union (EU) Delegation issues the following statement in agreement with the EU Heads of Mission in Sri Lanka:

“The EU Delegation in Colombo joins all those around the world commemorating World Human Rights Day and reiterates its solidarity with human rights defenders who continue to work bravely in difficult and hostile environments across the world. This year has special significance, as it is the 20th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which created the post of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Human rights are integral to the dignity of society and respect for individuals. The EU is committed to working with other countries to help them address their human rights challenges in order to create more prosperous, fair and just societies for all the world’s citizens. Many EU member states have grappled with difficult human rights challenges in the past, and continue to do so. By sharing our experience and working together we can make progress towards a better future for all.

In Sri Lanka, there have been significant improvements since the end of the conflict, particularly on resettlement and physical reconstruction. Funding from EU and its Member States has supported progress on de-mining and the construction of new houses, helping the displaced to return to their homes. We welcome the Northern Provincial Council elections and encourage the Government to take further action to implement the recommendations in the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission Report in order to ensure justice and meaningful reconciliation. Further challenges also remain in upholding the independence and effectiveness of the judiciary and the rule of law, strengthening freedom of expression, taking effective action to end religious intolerance and preventing sexual abuse of women and children.

We welcome the visits by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Envoy on Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and encourage the Sri Lankan government to extend further invitations to facilitate outstanding visit requests by other UN special mandate holders, including the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

The Delegation also takes this opportunity to encourage Sri Lankan authorities to engage in dialogue with, and draw on the support of, international partners who may be able to assist in the remaining challenging tasks. The EU continues to stand ready to offer assistance to the Sri Lankan government to help it address and overcome these challenges in order to help build a better and brighter future for all Sri Lankans.

Norway aligns itself to this statement.

END

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, also known as VDPA, is a human rights declaration adopted by consensus at the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993 in Vienna, Austria. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was created by this Declaration endorsed by General Assembly Resolution 48/121.