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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

27 February 2013

Excellency,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 24 February 2013 expressing concern over a side-event to be organized by non-governmental organizations on 1 March 2013 on human rights in Sri Lanka.

In this regard, I would like to clarify that the participation of and consultation with observers of the Human Rights Council, including NGOs, is based on arrangements, including Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996, and practices observed by the Commission on Human Rights (rule 7 of the Council's Rules of Procedure).

One such practice is that NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC have the right to organise side events. A large number of such meetings take place in the margins of the session and they do not reflect an official position of the Council. The organizers of side events take full responsibility for the content of their events.

As a President, I encourage all those who participate in the work of the Council, including Permanent Missions and NGOs, to discuss issues with the appropriate level of dignity and respect. This means and implies that all of us will have to respect and tolerate arguments, ideas and words expressed by others that may at times be uncomfortable to listen to. The space for discussion provided in the margins of the Human Rights Council's sessions should enable all points of view to be put forward, and I would therefore encourage you to consider organising a side event whereby your point of view can be shared. You may also wish to approach the organisers of the side event to formally share your concerns.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration

Remigiusz A. Henczel
President of the Human Rights Council

H.E. Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations Office
and other international organizations in Geneva