

TOWARDS A UNIVERSAL CULTURE OF COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

(1). Objective of the pledge

Sri Lanka is firmly committed to the effective application and further development of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the focal point of the National IHL Committee. The National IHL Committee assists national authorities in implementing and dissemination of IHL in Sri Lanka.

This pledge has been developed in line with work carried out by the National IHL Committee in collaboration with the ICRC with the aim of embracing a collective responsibility and reaffirming our commitment to protecting human dignity.

It is expected to reflect the significant work done by the National IHL Committee in implementing Resolution 1 of the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, themed “Bringing IHL Home: a road map towards better implementation of International Humanitarian law”, and to give effect to Resolution 1 of the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent under the theme of “Building a universal culture of respect for International humanitarian law”.

(2) Action Plan

The Government of Sri Lanka, pledges through cooperation, collaboration and collective action, to contribute to promote for and upholding of the values of international humanitarian law in the national discourse and wish to convey our commitment as follows;

- Contributing to the universalization of IHL by ratifying or acceding to treaties in the area of nuclear and humanitarian disarmament.

(i) Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Sri Lanka has traditionally played an important multilateral role in contributing to international peace and security through its consistent support for global norms and treaties against weapons of mass destruction (WMD) including nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament and encourage other States to follow the same. Sri Lanka acceded to the Anti-

Personnel Mine Ban Convention on 13 December 2017, as the 163rd State Party. Sri Lanka has taken action to enact Anti-Personnel Mines Ban Act No.03 of 2022. Accordingly, Sri Lanka pledges to implement the provisions of Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention domestically.

(ii) Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) (OSLO Convention)

Sri Lanka acceded to the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 1 March 2018, as the 103rd State Party. Government of Sri Lanka maintains its position on the lack of production, stockpiles and use of cluster munitions during the course of the conflict. Cabinet approved the process of incorporating the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) (OSLO Convention) into Sri Lanka's domestic legislation and now the Ministry of Defence is in the process of obtaining the certificate of constitutionality from the Attorney General's Department. Sri Lanka is at the final stages of completing internal procedures to enact domestic legislations. Therefore, Sri Lanka pledges to enact domestic legislations shortly in order to give effect to the provisions of the Convention domestically.

(iii) Contribution towards Lethal autonomous weapons systems

Sri Lanka, as a long standing advocator for humanitarian disarmament, humanitarian methods of warfare and non-proliferation of weapons of Mass Destruction, welcomes the adoption of the UNGA Resolution 78/241 on "Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems" which stresses the urgent need for the international community to address the challenges and concerns raised by autonomous weapons systems (AWS). As a co-sponsor of the resolution Sri Lanka appreciates the opportunity it provides to initiate inclusive dialogue and wider awareness on the issue as an important step forward to address the related challenges.

Intensifying efforts to reach an urgent multilateral agreement on the development and use of AWS is an important priority. Sri Lanka will therefore continue to be fully committed to engage constructively in discussions on this issue

(iv) **Biological Weapons Convention**

Sri Lanka has commenced the process of drafting domestic legislations to give effect to the provisions of Biological Weapons Convention. Sri Lanka wishes to inform the Conference that action will be taken to complete the process in due course with the technical assistance from the ICRC.

- Sri Lanka encourages States to consider the requirement of officially endorsing Geneva Conventions into their local languages in order to enhance dissemination of IHL

As we celebrate 75 years since the ratification of the Geneva Conventions in 1949, which now form the core of the principles of international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions require States Parties to disseminate IHL by translating the Conventions into national languages. In line with Sri Lanka's commitment to these principles, the National IHL Committee with the technical assistance from the ICRC has translated the Geneva Conventions into our vernacular languages, Sinhala and Tamil. Sri Lanka wishes to pledge to officially adopt these translations shortly.

- **Effective engagement with IHL obligations in a post conflict setting.**

The establishment of the Office of Missing Persons and ensuring its smooth functioning provides a concrete example of Sri Lanka's effective engagement with IHL obligations in a post conflict setting. An active OMP reiterates the commitment of the State towards providing families of the missing with knowledge of the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones who went missing during the conflict. Furthermore, engagement of the Sri Lankan authorities to address the issue of missing persons is instrumental in building trust and resilience within communities and ensuring effective reconciliation. Sri Lanka pledges to continue the work carried out by the OMP regarding missing persons.

- **Humanitarian assistance while adherence to IHL**

Sri Lanka's participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations throughout the world is an indication of Sri Lanka's extensive professional experience in all aspects of peacekeeping and providing humanitarian assistance and adherence to IHL. In this regard, the assistance provided by ICRC in enhancing IHL education among Sri Lankan security forces has been very

useful when they are assigned for UN Peacekeeping Missions. Since deploying its first contingent in 1958, Sri Lanka has been a long-standing contributor to United Nations Peacekeeping operations. At present, 310 Sri Lankan peacekeepers, including female officers, are serving in various capacities in UN Peace Operations, including in the most hostile and demanding deployment in Central Africa, South Sudan and Mali. Sri Lanka will continue to cooperate with the UN Peace Keeping operations in the future as well.

(3). Indicators for measuring progress:

Three National IHL Committee meetings were held and four review meetings were held to evaluate progress of IHL implementation during the last two years.

Sixth, Ninth and Twelfth editions of South Asian Regional IHL Conferences were co-hosted by Sri Lanka in 2015, 2019 and 2023 with the themes of “IHL Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” and Bringing IHL Home.

Sri Lanka has acceded to eighteen (18) IHL related treaties.