



15th session of the Implementation Review Group (IRG), 13th Open-ended intergovernmental expert meeting to enhance international cooperation and 18th Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Asset Recovery from 10-14 June 2024 in Vienna,

15th IRG -

Statement by

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Agenda Item – 4

Distinguished Chair and delegates,

At the very outset, I wish to place on record my appreciation for the opportunity to address the 15th session of the Implementation Review Group of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which provides a universally accepted legal framework for combating corruption.

I will very briefly reiterate the steps that Sri Lanka, as a country, has taken against corruption. Sri Lanka has adopted a holistic approach to fighting corruption by targeting all relevant institutions at all levels to meet the unique challenges of combating this scourge.

The Sri Lankan delegation is happy to say that the 21st Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka is the new step taken by the Sri Lankan Government, [stating-ensuring](#) their commitment to democracy, good governance, independence of the judiciary, and the rule of law by giving constitutional effect to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. UNCAC is the only convention that has been recognized by the constitution itself in Sri Lanka. This has given new life to existing institutions with an anti-corruption mandate and also formed new bodies charged with fighting corruption. Significantly, it recognizes the importance of implementing the provisions of UNCAC.

Mr. Chair,

At the same time, we are very happy to announce that Sri Lanka has successfully completed the first and second review sessions, and all efforts have been made to amend the anti-corruption laws to be in line with the recommendations made in the First Review Cycle and Second Review Cycle. Sri Lanka adopted several significant measures to comply with the relevant Articles of the UNCAC.

In keeping with international obligations such as UNCAC, Sustainable Development Goal No. 16.5, Jakarta Statement on Principles for Anti-Corruption Agencies, Colombo Commentary, and the implementation of the National Action Plan of Sri Lanka to Combat Corruption, the Sri Lankan Parliament enacted the Anti-Corruption Act No. 09 of 2023, which came into operation on 15th September 2023. The new provision of the Act provides operational independence to the Anti-Corruption Commission in the sense of acting independently, impartially, fairly, and in the public interest while not being subject to the control or direction of any person or authority except in terms of the Act and the Constitution. As for financial independence, it requires the Parliament to allocate funds to the Commission based on an estimate directly submitted to Parliament by the Commission.

Also, many other special matters have been included in the new law, including provisions for Local and International Cooperation, Joint Investigation, Sharing Information, Agreement and MoU between domestic and foreign institutions and states. Also, a number of criminal offenses recommended by the review cycle have been included in the law, including Bribery of Foreign Officials, Bribery in the Private Sector, Failure to declare a conflict of interest, non-reporting of sport corruption, Trade in influence, and Offenses relating to sporting events.

Mr. Chair, it is very important that this law introduces an offense against conflict of interest and introduces a system for obtaining assets and liabilities statements, through a centralized system. A Central Authority for declarations of assets and

liabilities will be established, solely responsible for the collection and verification of asset declarations. The prevailing Declaration of Assets and Liabilities Law has been strengthened to establish an effective asset declaration system for systematic asset disclosure and verification. The electronic asset declaration system provides for ease of submission, verification, and public access.

Also, it is a unique fact that the act itself has included laws for the prevention of corruption and the implementation of the government's anti-corruption policies, promote and advise to prevent corrupt practices, whistleblowers protection provisions, and new investigation methods using new technology. Towards this end, we have had several rounds of discussions with the World Bank and UNODC, and we thank them for their assistance. We note with appreciation that the UNODC has visited Sri Lanka on several occasions in connection with our work on anti-corruption and assisted us in many ways.

Mr. Chairman,

As a party to the UNCAC, we are pleased that the Implementation Review Mechanism of UNCAC has demonstrated its value exceeding our expectations. We are very happy to say that Sri Lanka's first and second review cycle of the UN Convention against Corruption were completed. Our experience from actively participating in the two review cycles has been both rewarding and enlightening.

In the second review session, Sri Lanka was able to review the country of Botswana, and thanks to all those who supported and, we are very happy about the selection of Sri Lanka to conduct the review sessions in the countries of Yemen and Turkmenistan, and we, as a country, expect the support of the relevant parties to carry out those reviews successfully.

Moreover, Sri Lanka has prepared a National Action Plan that identified productive engagement, 'action points' in the policy, legal, legislative, and executive domains. In this regard, we have taken currently many steps to implement the said plan.

We have now embarked on a progressive transitioning of CIABOC from its current position to a fully-

fledged, premier anti-corruption institution by increasing capacity and making crucial and innovative changes where needed. It is very important to have trained and experienced staff on the journey to eradicate bribery and corruption. Having a staff that is constantly evolving and full of international experience is an asset to a country. Thus it is understandable that capacity building must be an obligatory part of the whole anti-corruption process. In particular, providing Training Programs

for skill development and capacity building of the officers involved in the anti-corruption agencies must be considered a priority in its long-term goal towards a nation devoid of bribery. Accordingly, many of the provisions of the new Act are new to Sri Lanka and since it includes a number of fields in which it has no experience, Sri Lanka is ready to accept with very gratefulness if a training opportunity comes from suitable sources technical assistance in the field of international cooperation, drafting documents in MLA, and including Bribery of Foreign Officials, Bribery in the Private Sector, Failure to declare a conflict of interest, Non-reporting of corruption, Trade in influence, Offenses relating to sporting events.

Mr. Chairman,

In addition to that, there can be no sustainable development if corruption abounds. Sri Lanka is committed to enhancing the principles of the public trust doctrine, the principle of inter-generational equity, and preserving the national wealth for future generations.

We are committed, as I said before, to promoting the objectives of the Convention. This includes pursuing effective follow-up, establishing partnerships to share intelligence and best practices, and following the money. It is also vital to create anti-corruption networks, including with financial institutions, for the purpose of the recovery of stolen assets from foreign jurisdictions. In order to achieve this, international cooperation is key. While we acknowledge with appreciation the cooperation that currently exists, there needs to be more engagement to achieve the objectives envisaged in the Convention.

I thank you, Chair.