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THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

**IMADR Oral Statement: 34th session of the Human Rights Council
Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on minority issues**

15 March 2017

Speaker: Taisuke KOMATSU

Thank you Mr. President,

We welcome the Special Rapporteur's in-depth report on Sri Lanka. We commend the Government's engagement in facilitating her access to key stakeholders. We fully endorse her recommendations. We reiterate that immediate and substantial measures must be taken to demonstrate the Government's commitment to transitional justice and upholding of minority rights.

In addition to the recommendations for swift measures such as land return, demilitarisation in the North and East, and the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), we urge the Government to take steps to expedite effective prosecution relating to emblematic cases concerning minorities. Those include but are not limited to: Trinco 5; ACF; Nadarajah Raviraj; Joseph Pararajasingham; and Altuthgama cases. The culture of impunity can only be tackled by revealing the truth and holding accountable those responsible for spreading hate and violence against minorities. This will ensure building confidence that change is possible and reforms are underway.

While acknowledging the Government's efforts for inclusive decision-making processes demonstrated by the series of consultations on constitutional reforms and reconciliation mechanisms, we stress that consultations cannot be a box-ticking exercise. We therefore wish to highlight the need to: (a) include a provision to guarantee non-discrimination in the new Constitution; (b) introduce special measures to protect the mother tongue of small minorities like Veddas; and (c) undertake a study on caste-based social deprivation and exclusion in IDP and the plantation sector. We therefore strongly endorse the Special Rapporteur's call for the establishment of an independent minorities commission which can ensure the meaningful participation of minority communities, and promote and protect minority rights with embracing the diversity of society.

The Government of Sri Lanka's intention to listen to the voices of minorities is encouraging. To fulfil the promises of good governance, it is crucial that all institutions and processes for reforms reflect the ethnic, gender, linguistic and religious diversity of the Sri Lankan society. Finally, we wish to congratulate Ms. Rita Izsák-Ndiaye for the strength which she has given to this mandate through her 6 years of tireless work.

We thank you.