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**THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM****Oral Statement: 14th session of the Forum on Minority Issues****Item 5: Towards a lasting peace: positive initiatives to better protect the rights of minorities to prevent conflicts**

3 December 2021

Thank you, Madam Chair,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for adopting this year's Regional Forums to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Forums' online format serves as a good practice of the UN human rights system which brought minority representatives and other civil society actors much closer to your mandate.

To contribute to the discussion under this theme, we would like to share our initiatives at the international and national levels for minority rights protection in Sri Lanka. For over two decades, we have been carrying out joint advocacy with human rights defenders from the Tamil and Muslim communities and other civil society organisations at the UN human rights system, in particular at the Human Rights Council (HRC), to pursue truth, justice, accountability and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. It has contributed to the adoption of a series of the HRC resolutions on Sri Lanka since 2012, leading to the recent creation of the OHCHR accountability project<sup>1</sup>.

At the national level, our sister organisation IMADR Asia Committee promotes inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogues by bringing Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities together at cultural and sporting events, with a particular focus on children and youth. At the same time, the Asia Committee campaigns with its partners for justice for victims of the decades-long internal war, many of whom belong to minority communities. Yet, since 2019, there has been a resurgence of intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders speaking up for victims of the conflict.

Against this backdrop, we encourage the Special Rapporteur to clearly recognise the role of civil society, particularly minorities themselves, in conflict prevention at all levels, with the need to prevent intimidation and reprisals in his recommendations.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/Sri-Lanka-accountability-project.aspx>