



**77<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**Sixth Committee**

**Item 84: The rule of law at the national and international levels**

**Statement by the Sri Lanka Delegation**

**Friday, 07 October 2022**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and makes the following comments in our national capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka welcomes the continued focus on the rule of law at the national and international levels by the UN since the General Assembly's 61st session in 2006. The rule of law is a concept that describes the supreme authority of the law over Governmental action and individual behaviour. It is a concept grounded upon the principles of democracy, limited government, and a rules based order in consonance with the social contract.

We appreciate the UN Secretary General's report A/77/213, "Strengthening and Coordinating United Nations Rule of Law Activities." which emphasizes the UN's rule of law initiatives and advancements over the last year at the local, national, and global levels.

Mr. Chairman,

The rule of law is a critical principle and the cornerstone of governance. It is essential for maintaining political stability, achieving global peace and security, and advancing economic and social conditions, as well as safeguarding individual liberties and rights. For all societies, both nationally and internationally, the rule of law establishes the fundamental framework. It is our shared responsibility as Member States to strengthen it at the local, national, and global levels. We must also not forget that the rule of law is not only a stand-alone goal but also a crucial enabler of other SDGs as we work toward realizing the 2030 Agenda.

Sri Lanka reiterates that independent, effective, and competent judicial systems are the cornerstone of the rule of law as they provide an appropriate, peaceful means of resolving disputes, ensuring accountability, and providing justice. However, it must be appreciated that a

proper balance between all three branches of government – the judiciary, the executive and the legislature .

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka welcomes the focus of today's debate on the subtopic "The impacts of the global coronavirus disease pandemic on the rule of law at the national and international levels".

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on governance globally. The nature of the crisis, which prevented people from gathering safely, and the lack of pandemic preparedness, hampered the fundamental operation of legislative bodies and judiciaries. Fundamental freedoms of assembly, speech, and mobility were curtailed, and, rights to decent labor, health, and education suffered major setbacks. In circumstances where the effectiveness of pandemic laws issued by governments is a matter of life and death, the urgency with which action must be taken during a pandemic creates a law-making environment that promotes hasty action without scrutiny and the use of power without restraint.

Mr. Chairman

Sri Lanka has accommodated its diverse cultural, racial, and religious differences within its legal system, reflecting its strong commitment to the rule of law. The Sri Lankan Constitution's provisions on fundamental rights serve as an illustration of this reality. The protection of minority groups, the advancement of women's rights, and the protection of children's rights have all benefited from the provisions of the Constitution. Additionally, minority rights are supported by a number of personal laws that are enforced by the legal system.

Mr. Chairman

Sri Lanka accords high priority to the rule of law in its resolve to succeed in the economic recovery of the country. Since the implementation of the Right to Information Act in 2016, Sri Lanka has successfully protected the people's right to information with regard to acts taken by governmental entities in order to maintain legal and procedural transparency. Sri Lanka remains firmly committed to pursuing tangible progress on human rights through our domestic institutions and the constitutional framework of a sovereign Sri Lanka. This includes replacing the PTA with a comprehensive national security legislation, the introduction of constitutional amendments and a legal framework to strengthen democratic governance, participation and the rule of law, as well as independent institutional oversight.

Mr. Chairman,

The General Assembly is entrusted with the crucial responsibility of promoting the steady advancement of international law and its codification under Article 13 of the United Nations Charter. The United Nations has been successful in significantly strengthening the rule of law on a global scale through multilateral treaty processes that have been developed over the years.

Multilateral treaty bodies have grown in numbers dramatically over time. While this has contributed to advance international law, it has also heightened the need for States to enhance their capacities. The requirement for inclusivity and transparency has been made more apparent by the quick digital communication that are now a hallmark of multilateral diplomacy. Any multilateral treaty body must have these two components in order to evolve successfully and, ultimately, to operate effectively. The need for system-wide coherence and coordination, as well as avoiding task duplication based on overlapping mandates, has increased.

Mr. Chairman,

We stress that the laws are only as effective as how they are implemented. Additionally, implementation is only as good as the fairness it is based on. Sri Lanka, therefore, reiterates its call for systems to ensure a fair and just application of laws and principles agreed upon by Member States of the UN, including the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

It is said that Government can easily exist without laws, but law cannot exist without government. It is confidence in the men and women who administer the judicial system that is the true backbone of the rule of law. It is incumbent on all states that seek to establish and entrench the rule of law to develop, sustain and nourish the human resources vital to the ensuring the rule of law.

I thank you!