

Statement by Ambassador Dr Palitha Kohona
Permanent Representative of the Democratic Socialist Republic of
Sri Lanka to the UN

6th Committee, Agenda item 83
"The Rule of Law at the National and International levels"

9-10 October, 2014

Mr. Chairman,

From simple beginnings to the world today , society has become more sophisticated, complex, intertwined and interdependent. In this process, human civilization has given rise to different legal frameworks to preserve law and order, and in a broad sense, to distinguish right from wrong. From the laws of Manu to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, many efforts have been undertaken by human society, influenced by different philosophies, to strengthen a rule based framework to preserve peace and security and individual and community rights. Religious and philosophical thinking, as well as economic

and political factors, have had a significant influence on the evolution of the rule of law.

The rule of law at the national level serves as the cornerstone for a fair and functioning society. Without it, discussions on matters such as individual and community rights, economic development and environmental conservation would lack substance. It is the rule of law which facilitates the advancement of both public and private interests. Strengthening the rule of law, taking into account contemporary factors, is absolutely necessary for economic progress, as we discuss the Millennium Development Goals and the post 2015 Development Agenda. There are so many unknowns before us. We should look for long-term approaches to strengthen our domestic institutions to improve the economic and social fabric in our societies.

Mr Chairman,

Reflecting its strong attachment to the rule of law, Sri Lanka has accommodated its diverse cultural, ethnic and religious disparities within its legal framework. The extensive provisions on Fundamental Rights in the Constitution of Sri Lanka illustrate this reality. The judiciary can be invoked, by an aggrieved person using the fundamental rights provisions of the Constitution without the assistance of an attorney. The Constitutional provisions have contributed to the promotion and protection of child rights, the empowerment of women and the protection of minority groups. In addition, minority rights are accommodated through a rich and varied web of personal laws, which are given effect through the judicial system.

Mr Chairman,

The recent intensified efforts by the international community to tackle the threat of terrorism have brought to the fore the

difficulties in balancing national and security concerns with obligations relating to human rights. Terrorist groups have employed asymmetric military str

As we address the question of the rule of law, we should not forget the diversity of legal systems in the world, their philosophical underpinnings

Mr Chairman,

Sri Lanka has effectively contributed to the development of the rule of law. I note the role we played in the codification of the Law of the Sea. Whilst taking measures to strengthen the rule of law within its own domestic legal system, Sri Lanka remains ready to work to strengthen the rule of law in the international arena, as it has done in the past.

I thank you Mr Chairman.