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Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

LET US PROACTIVELY ADDRESS THE ISSUES FACED BY THE MARGINALISED AND VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES TO ENSURE DIGNITY, FREEDOM AND JUSTICE FOR ALL.

***HRCSL Chairperson's message on International of Human Rights 2022***

On 10<sup>th</sup> December each year, the world celebrates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the milestone document in the history of human rights. This year, as we approach the beginning of the 75<sup>th</sup> Year since the adoption of the UDHR, Human Rights Day is celebrated internationally under the theme “Dignity, freedom, and Justice for all”. The theme, built on the preamble of the UDHR, reemphasises the need to uphold the core principles of human rights, which is to recognize the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all people.

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), keeping in line with this year's theme and also identifying the gaps in human rights in Sri Lanka celebrates this day under the banner “I have a voice – Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for all”. The day is dedicated to create a platform for the persons from the marginalized and vulnerable communities to make their voices heard. It is also an exemplary call for action to all organizations and individuals to *identify* the marginalised and vulnerable communities in their own working environments and proactively *create enabling environments* to make their voices heard.

In Sri Lanka, marginalised and vulnerable communities still tend to be discriminated even due to laws, policies, government regulations, organizational rules and regulations, cultural practices, and social norms. The HRCSL as the key oversight body established to promote and protect human rights in Sri Lanka, takes every effort within its mandate and capacity to amplify the voices of the marginalized and vulnerable communities and also address their issues on a case by case basis.

However, as it is not the single responsible institution, to eradicate all infrastructural and other barriers that prevents people from living with dignity, freedom and justice, the HRCSL requests all Government institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations, Cooperate actors, Civil Society organizations and individuals to stand up for human rights in each of their capacities. We need to take a conscious effort to not just view the issues of these communities from a macroscopic view but also focus on the intersectionalities that further discriminate them in all levels. It is only then, we will be able to identify the unique challenges faced by each person and effectively create an environment that all persons can live with dignity, freedom and justice.

Justice Rohini Marasinghe,

Chairperson, Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

10<sup>th</sup> December 2022