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17 November 2023

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**இலங்கை மனித உரிமைகள் ஆணைக்குழு**  
**Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka**

H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe  
President of the Republic of Sri Lanka  
Minister of Finance, Economic Stabilisation and National Policies,  
Presidential Secretariat  
Colombo 01

Your Excellency,

**Observations and Recommendations on the Draft National Women's Commission Bill  
Draft Gender Equality Bill, and Draft Women's Empowerment Bill**

We write to you with reference to three draft Bills shared with the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka on 1 October 2023.

We wish to state at the outset that we welcome this legislative initiative and are grateful for the cooperation shown by your Secretariat and Ministry in enabling the Commission to fulfil its mandate in terms of section 10(c) of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Act, No. 21 of 1996. The said provision empowers the Commission to 'advise and assist the government in formulating legislation...in furtherance of the promotion and protection of fundamental rights'.

We wish to note that the Bills aim to ensure the fulfilment of Sri Lanka's obligations under international law including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

In view of further strengthening the Bills, we request that your Secretariat and Ministry consider the observations and recommendations enclosed herewith (Annexes 1, 2 and 3).

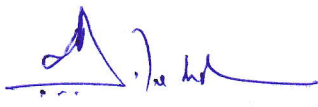
The Commission observes that there are substantial similarities in the provisions and legislative intent behind the Bills. It is, therefore, recommended that the Gender Equality Bill and the Women's Empowerment Bill be amalgamated into a single consolidated Bill. With reference to the institution that will be established under these Bills, we recommend that the Gender Equality Council be housed in the new department to which the Women's Bureau will be upgraded. We recommend that such an amalgamation be considered to minimise overlap and resource wastage. We recommend that the naming of the department as the 'Department for Gender Equality' be considered in view of such a change.

We also recommend that the appointment process with respect to the National Women's Commission be further strengthened, and that the members of the Commission be appointed on the recommendation of the Constitutional Council in a manner similar to the appointment of members to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka.

We urge you to consider publishing the three Bills as soon as possible to enable meaningful public consultation on their substance. Please be assured that the Commission is prepared to offer its continued advice and support in strengthening the Bills.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,



Justice L.T.B. Dehideniya  
Judge of the Supreme Court (Retired)  
Chairman  
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Justice L T B Dehideniya  
Chairman

Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Cc: Mr. Aritha Wickramasinghe  
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