



**30th Session of the
Human Rights Council
Item 2**

**Discussion on Sri Lanka
30 September 2015
Delivered by Renate Bloem**

Thank you Mr. President,

CIVICUS congratulates the High Commissioner, his staff on the quality of the report on the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka. It notes the seriousness of the findings that finally bring to the official attention of the Council the desperate plight of civilians caught up in the tragic events of the closing stages of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka – some 6 ½ years ago.

CIVICUS recalls that in the words of the UN Secretary-General, “**All victims of human rights abuses should be able to look to the Human Rights Council as a forum and a springboard for action.**” Regrettably the Council has failed for far too long to respond to the legitimate expectations of several hundred thousand such victims in Sri Lanka.

CIVICUS is particularly concerned over the unprecedented exclusion of all independent observers, domestic and international alike, including representatives of the UN System, of humanitarian and protection agencies, and the media, from the war zones. This created conditions that allowed for the mass violation of human rights and was clearly part of a deliberate policy to silence critics and human rights defenders. Members of the Council will recall that acts of intimidation were brought into this very building in an effort to avoid the devastating facts described in the OISL report from reaching the HRC.L report and the far-reaching recommendations of the High Commissioner – together with the peaceful democratic transition underway in Sri Lanka since the beginning of this year provide the Council now with the opportunity finally to assume its responsibilities and to take action in support of the victims who against great odds have continued to place confidence in the international community through the Human Rights Council.

In recognition of the new spirit of cooperation adopted by the newly established government, the Council must now find ways of accompanying Sri Lanka in the fulfillment of all its commitments to the people of Sri Lanka, especially the national minority Tamil community, to its international partners and to the Human Rights Council. At the same time it must continue to monitor the human rights situation in the island and the implementation of a broad process of transitional justice.

Whilst welcoming the actions now envisaged by the Government of Sri Lanka and by the HRC, CIVICUS underlines the essential role of a vibrant, independent and unconstrained civil society in ensuring that the page is definitively turned on this darkest chapter of the island’s history. Thank you