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A letter to inform about the possible catastrophic economic and social crises emerging in Sri Lanka and to seek the intervention of your office to bring about a solution to avoid the country falling into anarchy.

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) is a regional human rights organization associated with the UN human rights mechanisms for over 40 years and one which has worked very closely for the protection and promotion of human rights in Sri Lanka for the same period of time, we have the spirit and obligation to inform you and the relevant UN agencies about the rapidly developing, extremely critical situation, which if unaddressed, could lead to a serious collapse of the State and also the development of anarchy within the society at large.

As your good office will already know, Sri Lanka is now faced with the payment of debt related crisis may be the worst that it has ever experienced in its entire history. Many economists, bankers and people involved in businesses and enterprises as well as social organizations such as trade unions and other organizations associated with farmers and also all civil society organizations have been expressing their deepest fears about the developing situation in the country. As we write this, almost every day, massive demonstrations are taking place in Colombo, as well as in all other areas in the country, demanding an early solution to some of the pressing problems such as the problem of ever-increasing prices of essential goods, and the cutting down of the availability of power supplies, gas and almost every other basic essential of life. The acuteness of the problem could be reflected in the fact that the exams which were due to be held for school children were recently cancelled due to the inability of the authorities to provide papers for the students to write on during the exam. In every area of life, there is the reflection of a breakdown as the Government is unable to pay the prices for imports due

to the scarcity of United States Dollars. All the predictions are that this crisis is going to continue unless there is some genuine and credible intervention to get support from the international community, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other agencies, for the rescheduling of the payment of debts and at the same time, working out an extensive plan for bringing back stability to the country and to ensure a non-recurrence of the situation which caused this problem in the first place.

The present crisis comes as a result of a considerable period of neglect of the principles of good governance, as the result of which, the overview and supervision of financial institutions have also suffered very severely. In fact, the entirety of the State bureaucracy has been brought into an unprecedented crisis over several decades due to the centralization of power in the Presidential system, as the result of which, much of the governance related bureaucracy has been disempowered. Direct deregulation of almost every area of life has made it difficult to conduct any kind of rational management of the society. Among other things, this has also affected the administration of justice, the institutions of policing, prosecutorial institutions as well as the Judiciary itself. It is indeed a crisis of such magnitude already. The question that is commonly discussed by the Government, as well as the Opposition parties and also economists, all intellectual layers of society, as well as ordinary people is: what is the way out of this terrible debt trap?

Discussions are now focused on the way to seek the assistance of the IMF and also possibly other international agencies. However, the major problem that is thwarting the move towards this goal is the complete breakdown of the people's faith in the political system as a whole. And this too is not just the product of a single act but is the result of a process that has developed over a long period of time. This loss of credibility in the political establishment as a whole has created a distrust on the one hand between the Government and all the Opposition parties, and on the other hand, the political establishment and the people as a whole.

It is at this juncture that an intervention by your Office and other UN agencies would help, for by playing a mediating role you could assist Sri Lanka to develop short-term and long-term plans for the recovery of the stability of the country and also to prevent the country falling into a situation of anarchy. If this opportunity is lost, what might happen in the immediate future is difficult to project.

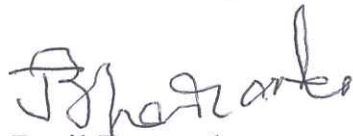
A huge amount of information made available by many persons including

persons who have played key roles in the past in the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, as well as in other financial institutions and the State bureaucracy and many others in the media and civil society are freely available now for anyone who would undertake a serious study into this tragic situation now faced by Sri Lanka. Under these circumstances, we urge you as the Head of the UN, which has played many good roles on behalf of Sri Lanka over a long period, to negotiate with the Sri Lankan Government as well as the Opposition parties and others to work out a sustainable plan to overcome this present situation and to ensure stability for this country.

As an important country situated in the Indian Ocean from the point of view of geopolitics, instability in Sri Lanka is also a matter of concern in international politics which gives further reasons as to justify a proactive role that could be played by the UN under these circumstances.

The AHRC is a nonpartisan organization not affiliated to any political body and has no other agenda except the protection and promotion of the rights of the people.

Thank you
Yours sincerely



Basil Fernando
Director for Policy and Programmes,
Asian Human Rights Commission