

Human Rights Council – 22nd session
Point 6 – adoption of the report of Sri Lanka
March 15th, 2013

Speaker: Albert Hengelaar, World Evangelical Alliance

Mr. Chair,

As World Evangelical Alliance, representing 600 million Christians worldwide, we welcome the commitment of the government of Sri Lanka to accept two recommendations on religious freedom. The recommendations promote reconciliation and inter-religious dialogue. They want to protect freedom of religion in a pluralistic society. In this context it puzzles us that the government of Sri Lanka rejected another recommendation (128.91) which calls for the same. Consistency is everything in the UPR. Therefore we would appreciate that the government of Sri Lanka also accepts recommendation 128.91.

One of the accepted recommendations calls for stepping up efforts to protect freedom of religion. This entails removing blockades to construction and continuation of places of worship. In our UPR report we highlighted that the 2008 and 2011 Circulars from the Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs have had a negative impact for the places of worship of our church denominations. It seems the government wants to decide which religious community is legitimate and which one is not. This is contrary to the principle of religious freedom and pluralism.

Mr. Chair, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon in September last year emphasized that Rule of Law is fostered by a "strong civil society, practiced tolerance and celebrated diversity". In other words: Pluralism is not a problem, it is the solution. We wish that Mr. Ban Ki-Moon's words will echo everywhere and more especially in the ancient nation of Sri Lanka.

Thank you very much.