

**Opening Remarks by Ambassador Tamara Kunanayakam, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva at the Organisational Meeting on the Right to Development, 7 September 2011**

Excellencies and delegates,

I am honoured and privileged to be nominated by the Non-Aligned Movement, to the position of Chair/Rapporteur of our Working Group. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the NAM and all regional groups for supporting my election to this post. The Right to development and its full and uninhibited realisation lies at the highest priority for NAM and also for Sri Lanka, in its national capacity.

I wish to appreciate the work undertaken by the previous Chair/Rapporteur of the Working Group and also the High Level Task Force on the Implementation of the Right to Development and their efforts in completing the three phases of the workplan, and the work undertaken by the task force on criteria and sub-criteria for the implementation of the right to development.

It is indeed an important year for the Working Group as we celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Right to development. The ongoing multiple global crises – economic, financial, social, political, environmental, as well as those related to food, energy, freshwater – and their impact on developing countries, in particular, has emphasised the important international obligation to cooperate which is the essence of the right to development. The right to development is a multidimensional right – both individual and collective, which places the human person, individually and collectively, at the centre of development not only as its object but as the subject of his or her own history. Dynamic and systemic in its approach, the right to development entails individual and collective responsibilities on States for the creation of a favourable international environment by eliminating the obstacles to development, and thereby creating a national environment conducive for the realisation of this right.

As we are all aware, much work still needs to be done to attain the Millennium Development Goals for all by 2015. Accelerated and sustained efforts are needed towards eradication of poverty and lasting improvements in nutrition, health and education, the well-being of children and jobs for youth. Developing countries are being hit by rising food and energy prices and excessive speculation in global commodities market. South-South cooperation actions are voluntary and undertaken in a spirit of solidarity; they cannot be a substitute for long undertaken but still unfulfilled North-South development assistance commitments. A critical essential in developing countries being able to cope with the huge challenges that confront them is to have the necessary policy space at the national level, and multilateral institutions that are supportive of that space. Therefore we must not shy away from pushing towards mainstreaming development perspectives into human rights issues at the normative and operational levels.

I hope in the coming weeks we can define how best we are going to organise our work and consolidate and build on what has already been done. I count on the support of Members of the Working Group and of Member States to conduct our deliberations towards a successful conclusion.