-Check against delivery-

## Oral Statement

**Item 2: General Debate on High Commissioner Oral Update on Sri Lanka**

14 September 2021

UN Human Rights Council

Forty-eight Session

13 September – 8 October 2021

Madam President,

I speak on behalf of fourteen organisations.

We reiterate the broad range of serious human rights concerns in Sri Lanka highlighted by the High Commissioner.

In line with the trend of ongoing militarisation identified by the High Commissioner and UN human rights bodies we note with concern, the militarisation of drug control and treatment in the country, and its negative repercussions on human rights as well as individual and public health.

Civil society has documented a worrying pattern of deaths in custody of persons arrested for drug offences in supposed shoot-outs with law enforcement, or while assisting law enforcement operations. The lack of investigation into these custodial deaths entrenches impunity and the use of violence by state agencies.

We highlight the existence of laws that contravene human rights standards, including by giving arbitrary powers to law enforcement and the judiciary to mandate people to drug rehabilitation.

People detained in drug treatment centres – some of which are managed by the Sri Lanka army - suffer physical and psychological violence, inhuman conditions of detention, and lack of evidence-based treatment.

Madam President,

We urge the government of Sri Lanka to adopt a human rights and health centred approach to drug policy, abide by a zero tolerance policy on torture, investigate all deaths in custody, and ensure those found responsible are held accountable.

We encourage the High Commissioner to include a comprehensive analysis of the human rights impact of drug control laws and practices in her next update on Sri Lanka to the Council.

Thank you.

**Co-signing organisations:**

1. Harm Reduction International
2. Adayalam Centre for Policy Research
3. Anuradhapura District Citizens Committee
4. Asian Human Rights Commission
5. Centre for Human Rights and Development
6. Centre for Policy Alternatives
7. Family Rehabilitation Centre
8. Human Rights Organisation, Kandy
9. Human Rights Watch
10. IMADR Asia Committee
11. Law & Society Trust
12. Right to Life
13. Rights Now
14. Rule of Law Forum