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An international investigation is essential for justice, reconciliation and ending the cycle of impunity in Sri Lanka: Amnesty International oral statement to the 25th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (3 – 28 March 2014)

26 March 2014

Item 2

Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

OHCHR Report on promoting reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka
General debate

Mr. President, Madam Deputy High Commissioner,

Amnesty International supports the recommendation to establish an international inquiry mechanism to further investigate the alleged violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The failure of the Government of Sri Lanka to conduct independent and credible investigation into such alleged violations makes an international investigation essential. It is essential to provide justice for the victims of the armed conflict. It is essential for reconciliation. It is essential to break the cycle of impunity that fuels ongoing serious human rights violations in contemporary Sri Lanka.

Madam Deputy High Commissioner,

Amnesty International welcomes the attention that the High Commissioner and state delegations have given today to the need to protect human rights defenders in Sri Lanka. We remain deeply concerned about the welfare of both high profile and lesser-known human rights defenders as the Government of Sri Lanka continues its

crackdown on dissent. Together we must find ways to ensure the safety of these brave persons and the full respect for their human rights.

Amnesty International would also like to pay homage to the courage of the Sri Lankan victims of human rights violations who seek justice. The report of OHCHR describes the emblematic case of the Trincomalee Five and expresses great concern that after eight years of investigations, commissions of inquiry and repeated commitments by the Government, the case has not been brought to a conclusion. Dr. Manoharan – the father of one of the young men summarily executed in Trincomalee in January 2006 – is watching this discussion. He has asked Amnesty International to thank, through you, High Commissioner Pillay, for her report and her pursuit of justice for the victims of human rights violations and crimes under international law in Sri Lanka. Those victims know the hollow nature of the Government promises to pursue justice. They appeal to this Council to support them by giving effect to the recommendation to establish an international inquiry mechanism.

Thank you Mr. President.