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Media Release

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***On the Official Release of the Report of the
UN Secretary General's Advisory Panel on Sri Lanka***

The Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations (AFTA), the umbrella body of the peak Tamil Associations in Australia and New Zealand welcomes the official release of the above report by the United Nations on Monday 25 April. AFTA earlier appealed to the UN Secretary General (UNSG) to release the report in full without further delay, to end Sri Lanka's partial release of the report and the mischievous media speculations that followed.

AFTA is satisfied to see that the three member panel has said in its report that there were "*credible allegations, which if proven, indicate that a wide range of serious violations of international humanitarian law and international rights law was committed both by the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, some of which would amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity*". AFTA is also contended that the panel in their report has urged the Sri Lankan Government (SLG) to acknowledge formally and in public its responsibility for the extensive civilian casualties in the final stages of the conflict.

AFTA, whilst welcoming the panel's recommendation that the Sri Lankan government should respond to the serious allegations "*by initiating an effective accountability process beginning with genuine investigations*" which would meet international standards, wishes to register its grave doubts on SLG taking any genuine effort on this matter. The blatant failure of the several commissions of inquiry appointed by the SLG in the past to investigate crimes committed by its security forces and that of the latest Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), stand testimony for this pessimism.

The SLG had earlier dismissed the report handed to them for their review as "*fundamentally flawed*" and "*biased*". Subsequently their foreign minister Hon. G. L Peiris had asked the United Nations system to consider "*whether this report will be useful. Is it going to contribute to the building up of national unity? Or will it do the opposite, really to accentuate differences, bitterness, acrimony? Which are the many things that we want to get away from.*" But the past experience gained from many conflicts around the globe including in South Africa shows that genuine reconciliation can be achieved only through establishing the truth, acknowledging wrong doings, bringing perpetrators to books, compensating the victims and implementing a lasting political solution and ***not through sweeping the crimes under the carpet as Hon. Peiris wants.***

AFTA is encouraged by the decision of the UNSG to respond positively to the Panel's recommendation for a review of the United Nations' actions regarding the implementation of its humanitarian and protection mandates during the war in Sri Lanka – particularly in the last stages.

AFTA is disappointed by the UN statement that "*in regard to the recommendation that he establish an international investigation mechanism, the Secretary-General is advised that this will require host country consent or a decision from Member States through an appropriate intergovernmental forum.*" **This means the Security Council, General assembly or the UN Human Rights Council only can initiate such an International investigation mechanism.** However AFTA wishes to point out that whilst the UN Charter describes the UNSG as "*chief administrative officer*" of the Organization, **the Charter also empowers the Secretary-General to "bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security".**

AFTA is also encouraged by the recent Security Council decision to be more proactive in the name of human rights, authorising military intervention in Libya to protect civilians.

AFTA therefore appeals to the UNSG to bring this matter to the urgent attention of the UNSC and urges the UN member nations, especially the power wielding nations in the UNSC, US, Britain, France, Russia and China to help the UNSG to implement the panel's recommendation to bring sustainable reconciliation and lasting peace and prosperity in Sri Lanka.

AFTA Member Associations:

Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Darwin, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland and Wellington