[Dulari: Please complete the highlighted sections using the material below that section.]

Diyawanna Declaration

(Source: https://www.parliament.lk/en/committee-news/view/1701)

The “Diyawanna Declaration” was launched at the Special All-Faith and All-Party Conference convened at Parliament by the Select Committee of Parliament to study and report to Parliament its recommendations to ensure Communal and Religious Harmony in Sri Lanka on 26-04-2019.

PREAMBLE

1. Recommending the need for all party leaders including the President, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to work in cooperation with each other regardless of narrow political, religious or party differences in order to ensure all citizens are able to exist without fear or suspicion and to ensure the security of the motherland and all her people.
2. Emphasizing the need for the three arms of government, i.e., the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary to work smoothly with mutual understanding.
3. Taking relevant decisions by means of discussion and common agreement in the event there are deficiencies in the Constitution and the 19th amendment, which require remedies. Until such time to provide space to move ahead under the prevailing law. However, such action should not pose a hindrance to the functioning of the independent commissions.
4. Ensuring that the National Security Council is met regularly and the President, the Prime Minister and the State Minister for Defence attend those meetings.
5. In keeping with the practices followed by other countries with respect to the Police, bringing the administration of the Police under a full-time Minister to function as line Ministry.
6. In consideration of the fact that continuous discourse which was carried out among religious leaders and political and civil society leaders under the patronage of the Parliamentary Select Committee for National and Religious Co-existence in Sri Lanka which was established in March 2018 consequent to the incidents that took place in Digana, Kandy were highly instrumental in minimizing communal clashes in the wake of the unfortunate events which unfolded on the last 21st, organizing more such conferences in different parts of the island. Next conference will be held in Vavuniya.
7. Re-establishing the community police service and maintaining a strong network of coordination between the Police and the general public.
8. Taking immediate steps to prevent the spread of false rumours causing negative impacts on the public life and disrupting work in offices and to establish a mechanism which can provide true and accurate news to the public.
9. Requesting from the state and private media, to be responsible in the use of media and refrain from expressing political opinions which fuel discord.
10. It is the view of the Select Committee of Parliament for National and Religious Harmony that the main objective of the attack on 21 April was to fuel disharmony among different communities and reach their extremist goals hence the society should be educated further, regarding the need to work in harmony and brotherhood without succumbing to their tactics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(source: <https://srilankabrief.org/diyawanna-declaration-for-communal-and-religious-harmony-in-sri-lanka/>)

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RECOMMENDATIONS

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I. Inter-faith dialogue with relevant specialists to be regularly carried out at the urban and rural grassroots levels to voluntarily resolve differences that arise from time to time in order to reduce the degree of fear and suspicion and iron out potential conflicts.

II. Community-based mechanism of dealing with issues should be established where the ordinary citizens are included at the decision-making level.

III. Ideas of peace and reconciliation should be instilled in school children across the Island. Students must be given an opportunity to study their respective religious / cultural norms to be practiced within the context of a broader Sri Lankan identity and universal values.

IV. School children must be taken to visit places of worship of other religions with a view to foster tolerance and understanding, and create opportunities for comparative learning.

V. Trilingual amity schools should be instituted to reduce tension and encourage unity while regulating admissions to state schools in urban areas to reflect a percentage of not less than 20% of students from other religions.

VI. A special day for peace and communal harmony should be declared and included in the school calendar so that students can voluntarily celebrate cultural diversity together. One student can be selected to deliver a short speech at School Assembly on the benefits of communal harmony. The Additional Zonal Director for Education should be from the non-majority race in each region.

VII. The spread of religious institutions engaging young people in particular must be supported. This will serve the twin purposes of encouraging spirituality among the youth while discouraging their involvement in anti-social activities and the spread of narcotic drugs, alcohol, gambling, smoking and other vices.

VIII. A policy should be drafted to ensure that schools in cosmopolitan urban areas are not limited to single religion or language.

IX. Leadership at the national, provincial and local authority levels must commit to regular annual public events to uphold non-discrimination in the discharge of their public duties particularly in public sector recruitments maintaining as far as the law permits, the respective levels of ethnicity in all public institutions and guaranteeing non-discriminatory administration and decision making.

X. A comprehensive island-wide survey to gauge public perceptions and expectations on national unity and reconciliation while reviewing new developments must be conducted with the support of the relevant line ministries and to organize future proceedings of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the basis of the survey results.

XI. More cross-cultural activities such as street dramas and cultural shows designed to promote mutual respect and understanding must be conducted at the grassroots level.

XII. A mechanism to regulate construction of religious structures, statues and places of public worship should be introduced.

XIII. Hate speech must be criminalized and included in the Penal Code. Laws that can radicalize such as incarceration in remand prisons for periods exceeding three months without trial must be done away with.

XIV. Proper laws on media regulation on spreading racial and religious discord should be implemented. The media must report both sides of a story and not just the hate inciting factors and help the common man understand the underlying facts during times of tension.

XV. A civil, statutory watchdog mechanism, preferably under the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, must be established to monitor in particular political parties, the media and the forces to ensure individuals within these institutions refrain from inciting communal hatred in any organized way.

XVI. The state must promote the use of all languages / Officials languages and encourage all communities to learn languages of the other communities. Language rights must be secured for all.

XVII. More Tamil speaking police officers should be appointed in areas where Tamil-speaking persons constitute the majority of the population so that the people will have better access to the police.

XVIII. A Race Relations Board with the funds and authority to look in to problems that affect religious harmony can be created. Alternatively, a sub-committee can be set up under the Human Rights Commission to deal exclusively with complaints of communal incitement and violence which will allow for investigations to be carried out within the ambit of the law and not in an arbitrary manner, and to take appropriate remedial action including initiating criminal proceedings.

XIX. The Police Ordinance should be amended. A positive image of the police should be maintained, and strategies must be device to restore public confidence in the law enforcement agencies.

XX. Laws should be enforced uniformly with no reference to ethnic and religious identity. The law enforcers should be prepared to and fully alert to handle racial tensions at the onset and take preventive measures where required.

XXI. The police should have a special unit that is trained to handle racial tensions just like the UN peace keeping force. This unit can be under the Special Task Force (STF). It should have an equivalent number of members from the different ethnics and religious groups, and should be the first to be called in an event of communal tensions. Contingents from this special unit must be stationed in identified places with a history of communal antagonism but performing general police duties during normal times.

XXII. They should be advisory boards for this Committee at the regional level and the main Parliamentary Committee must excerpt pressure on these regional committees of bodies to implement what is discussed in the national level and address issues that arise.

XXIII. As there is a need for greater understanding of the factors that cause violence, it would be necessary to engage both state and non-state actors who have investigated, researched and / or studied the issue to gain their insights.

XXIV. The Select Committee must meet regularly, at least once in every three months to receive reports from the newly established and existing institutions and mechanisms and to review progress in the agreed areas of implementation.

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