

**PARLIAMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF**   
**SRI LANKA**

**OFFICE FOR NATIONAL UNITY AND RECONCILIATION**

**ACT, No. 1 OF 2024**

**[Certified on 23rd of January, 2024]**

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| *Office for National Unity and Reconciliation* | 1 |

*Act, No. 1 of 2024*

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L.D.-O. 16/2023

ANACTTOPROVIDEFORTHEESTABLISHMENTOFTHEOFFICEFORNATIONAL UNITYANDRECONCILIATION, INORDERTOENSUREANDPROMOTE NATIONALUNITYANDRECONCILIATIONINSRILANKA; TOSETOUTTHE POWERS, DUTIESANDFUNCTIONSTHEREOFANDTOPROVIDEFOR MATTERSCONNECTEDTHEREWITHORINCIDENTALTHERETO.

WHEREAS having regard to the need and importance of Preamble national unity and reconciliation in the socio-economic   
development process in Sri Lanka and the commitment and   
consensus for the achievement of the same;

AND WHEREAS it has become a matter of national importance to establish an office for national unity and reconciliation in order to assure to every citizen equal opportunities in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres whilst safeguarding the identity and to build an inclusive society in which diversity will be respected and all communities will coexist in harmony and unity;

NOW THEREFORE BEit enacted by the Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka as follows: -

**1.**  This Act may be cited as the Office for National Unity Short title and Reconciliation Act, No. 1 of 2024.

**2.** The objects of the Act shall be - Object**s**of the Act

(*a*) to promote and foster national unity, reconciliation   
 and peaceful coexistence among all persons in Sri   
 Lanka;

(*b*) to formulate and recommend to the Government, a   
 national policy on reconciliation and coexistence;

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(*c*) to facilitate the implementation of policies and   
 programmes in relation to national unity and   
 reconciliation that would help to build   
 understanding, harmony and unity among all   
 communities;

(*d*) to recommend to the Government, measures to be   
taken to resolve matters causing tensions and   
conflicts within and among the different   
communities;

(*e*) to provide assistance to thestakeholders working   
 on reconciliation and coexistence in order to   
 achieve coherence in peace and national unity   
 initiatives;and

(*f*) to assist and facilitate the implementation of any   
 recommendation made by any reconciliation   
 endeavour established under any written law, or   
 any policy of the Government, for the purpose of   
 achieving national unity and reconciliation.

PART I

ESTABLISHMENTOFTHEOFFICEFORNATIONALUNITYAND

RECONCILIATION

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| Establishment of the Office for  National Unity  and  Reconciliation | **3.**  (1) There shall be established an office which shall be called and known as the “Office for National Unity and Reconciliation” (hereinafter referred to as the**“**ReconciliationOffice”). |

(2) The Reconciliation Office shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal and may

sue and be sued in its corporate name.

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(3) The headquarters of the Reconciliation Office shall be situated in Colombo and the Reconciliation Office may, from time to time, establish such number of regional offices as may be necessary, to achieve its mandate.

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| **4.**  (1) The Reconciliation Office shall consist of - | | Constitution of the  Reconciliation Office |
| (*a*) | one *ex-officio* member appointed by the President, |
| as nominated by the Minister, who shall be an | |

officer not below the rank of an Additional Secretary   
of the Ministry of the Minister; and

(*b*) ten other members appointed by the President on   
 the recommendation of the Minister made in   
 accordance with the provisions of subsection (2)   
 (hereinafter referred to as the “appointed members”).

(2) In making recommendations for the appointment of members referred to in paragraph (*b*) of subsection (1), the Minister shall have due regard to -

(*a*) ensure that the composition of theReconciliation   
 Office reflects the pluralistic nature of the Sri   
 Lankan society;

(*b*) ensure that the persons recommended to be   
 appointed as members of the Reconciliation Office   
 shall be persons having eminence and experience   
 in one or more of the fields of human rights law,   
 international humanitarian law, reconciliation and   
 social harmony, national unity, management,   
 project planning and regional development; and

(*c*) ensure that the persons recommended to be   
appointed as members of the Reconciliation Office   
are not subject to any disqualification specified in   
section 5.

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(3) The President may, on the recommendation of the Minister, appoint one member as the Chairperson of the Reconciliation Office.

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| Disqualification to be a member of the  Reconciliation | **5.**  A person shall be disqualified from being appointed or continuing as a member of the Reconciliation Office, if such person – |

Office   
 (*a*) is or become a Member of Parliament, of any Provincial Council or of any Local Authority;

(*b*) is not, or ceases to be, a citizen of Sri Lanka;

(*c*) has been or is adjudged an insolvent by a court of   
 competent jurisdiction;

(*d*) has been or is found to have a conflict of interest,   
which in the opinion of the President, formed on   
the recommendation of the Minister, conflicts   
with his duties as a member of the Reconciliation   
Office;

(*e*) is or becomes unfit to continue in office by reason   
 of illness or other infirmity of mind or body;

(*f*) has been or is declared to be of unsound mind by a   
 court of competent jurisdiction;

(*g*) has served or is serving or a sentence of   
imprisonment imposed by any court in Sri Lanka   
or any other country; or

(*h*) absents himself from three consecutive meetings   
without previously obtaining leave from the   
Reconciliation Office.

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| **6.** (1) Every appointed member of the Reconciliation Office shall, unless such member vacates office earlier by death, resignation or removal, hold office for a term of three | Term of office  of the appointed members |

years from the date of the appointment and unless such member has been removed, shall be eligible for reappointment for not more than one further term, whether consecutive or otherwise.

(2) For the purpose of this section, the period in which a member is appointed as an acting member shall not be considered as a ‘term’ of office within the meaning of this section.

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| **7.** (1)The office of an appointed member of the Reconciliation Office shall become vacant - | | Removal and resignation of appointed  members |
| (*a*) | upon the death of such member; |
| (*b*) | upon such member resigning such office by writing |

addressed to the President;

(*c*) upon such member being removed from office on   
 any ground specified in section 5; or

(*d*) on the expiration of such member’s term of office.

(2) A member of the Reconciliation Office may be removed from office by the President, if such person becomes disqualified under section 5 to be a member of the Reconciliation Office.

(3) The Chairperson may resign from the office of Chairperson by letter addressed to the President.

(4) Subject to the provisions of subsections (1) and (2), the term of office of the Chairperson shall be the period of membership of the Reconciliation Office.

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(5) (*a*) If the Chairperson of the Reconciliation Office becomes temporarily unable to perform the duties of his office, by reason of illness or other infirmity or due to absence from Sri Lanka or any other reason, the President may, subject to the provisions of section 4, appoint any other member of theReconciliation Office to act as the Chairperson.

(*b*) If a member of the Reconciliation Office becomes temporarily unable to perform the duties of his office, by reason of illness or other infirmity or due to absence from Sri Lanka or any other reason, the President may, subject to the provisions of section 4, appoint any other qualified person to temporarily act in place of such member during such period.

(6) No act or proceeding of the Reconciliation Office shall be deemed to be invalid by reason only of the existence of any vacancy among its members, or defect in the appointment of any member thereof.

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| Quorum and the meetings of the Reconciliation  Office | **8.** (1) The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Reconciliation Office. In the absence of the Chairperson of any meeting of the Reconciliation Office, the members present at such meeting shall elect one of the members of the |

Reconciliation Officeto preside at such meeting.

(2) The Chairperson or the member presiding at any such meeting of the Reconciliation Office shall, in addition to his own vote, have a casting vote.

(3) The quorum for meetings of the Reconciliation Office shall be five members.

(4) Subject to the other provisions of this Act, the Reconciliation Office may make rules, to regulate the procedure in regard to the conduct of its meetings, and the transaction of business at such meetings.

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PART II

MANDATE, POWERS, DUTIESANDFUNCTIONSOFTHE

RECONCILIATIONOFFICE

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| **9.** TheReconciliation Office shall have the mandate to – | | Mandate of the Reconciliation Office |
| (*a*) | make recommendations to the Government and |

relevant authorities towards achieving national   
unity, reconciliation and durable peace in Sri   
Lanka;

(*b*) formulate a national policy and national action plan   
 on reconciliation and coexistence;

(*c*) facilitate and implement programmes to promote   
national unity and reconciliation in Sri Lanka and   
to monitor the implementation thereof; and

(*d*) recommend to the Government, measures to be   
 taken to resolve matters causing tensions and   
 conflicts within and among the different   
 communities, having adverse effects on national   
 unity.

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| **10.** The Reconciliation Office shall have the following powers, duties and functions: - | | Powers, duties  and functions of the  Reconciliation  Office |
| (*a*) | to make recommendations to the Government and |

relevant authorities, on matters relevant to building   
national unity and reconciliation in Sri Lanka and   
other matters specified in the mandate of the   
Reconciliation Office;

(*b*) to formulate a national policy on reconciliation   
 and coexistence and assist the implementation of   
 the same;

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(*c*) to formulate and implement the national action plan   
 on reconciliation and coexistence comprising of   
 the programmes specified in the Schedule to this   
 Act;

(*d*) to identify the persons or groups of persons   
aggrieved within the social layers of the Sri Lankan   
society due to ethnic, religious, linguistic, social,   
political and economic factors;

(*e*) to develop affirmative action programmes for the   
 persons or groups of persons referred to in paragraph   
 (*d*) within the national action plan on reconciliation   
 and coexistence;

(*f*) to pursue the efforts towards reconciliation and the   
 strengthening of national unity, and to address post-  
 conflict concerns such as the return and resettlement   
 of internally displaced people, and the   
 rehabilitation and reintegration of concerned   
 persons;

(*g*) to launch public awareness and education   
campaigns on the national policy on reconciliation   
and coexistence and the national action plan;

(*h*) to mainstream the values defined in the national   
 policy on reconciliation and coexistence within   
 Government institutions and existing national   
 initiatives through annual work plans;

(*i*) to identify the constraints to national integration   
 and to take suitable action based on discussion and   
 consensus of the relevant stakeholders;

(*j*) to collaborate with the Ministries, government   
 departments and other institutions dealing with   
 matters relating to reconciliation and peace   
 building;

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(*k*) to review various strategies that are being   
implemented and due to be implemented with   
regard to the national integration and reconciliation   
and to assist in thesettlement of issues in   
implementing such strategies;

(*l*) to make recommendations to the Government and   
 other relevant authorities for the consultation with   
 relevant stakeholders on required policies and   
 actions for national unity, reconciliation,   
 coexistence and building a lasting peace;

(*m*) to assist the relevant authorities -

(i) to prepare and implement programmes on   
 the promotion of national integration,   
 reconciliation and coexistence and national   
 harmony and to integrate such programmes   
 into development plans at the district level;

(ii) to implement the recommendations made by   
 any reconciliation endeavour established   
 under any written law, or any policy of the   
 Government, for the purpose of achieving   
 national unity and reconciliation;

(iii) to resolve issues that may emerge in the   
 process of peace building and reconciliation   
 by making proposals on appropriate solutions   
 to such issues; and

(iv) to seek funds for implementation of   
 programmes and projects on national unity   
 and reconciliation, conducted under this   
 Act;

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(*n*) to liaise and coordinate with other local and foreign   
institutions, development partners and civil   
society with a view to promoting the objects of the   
Act;

(*o*) to assist, guide and facilitate peace and   
reconciliation programmes conducted by local   
organisations including community based   
organisations;

(*p*) to make rules to ensure the effective functioning of   
the Reconciliation Office including its   
administration;

(*q*) to make rules and issue guidelines from time to   
time which shall include gender and child   
responsive policies, to be followed by the staff of   
the Reconciliation Office relating to the exercise,   
performance and discharge of its powers, duties and   
functions;

(*r*) to appoint,employ and dismiss officers and   
employees of the Reconciliation Office and to   
exercise disciplinary control over such officers and   
employees;

(*s*) to request secondment of public officers to the   
Reconciliation Office; and

(*t*) to appoint committees and establish in addition to   
 any unit or division specifically mentioned in this   
 Act, divisions and units as are required for the   
 effective administration and functioning of the   
 Reconciliation Office and to delegate such powers   
 and functions as are necessary to such committees,   
 divisions and units.

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PART III

SECRETARIAT

**11.** (1) The Reconciliation Office shall have a Secretariat Secretariat which shall be charged with the responsibility of   
administering the affairs of the Reconciliation Office.

(2) The Reconciliation Office shall appoint a Director-General, who shall be a person having qualifications and experience in the field of national unity and reconciliation and the Director-General shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Reconciliation Office.

(3) There may be appointed, by the Reconciliation Office, such other officers and servants as may be necessary to assist the Reconciliation Office in the exercise, performance and discharge of its powers, duties and functions.

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| **12.**  (1) At the request of the Reconciliation Office, any officer in the public service may with the consent of that officer and the Secretary to the Ministry of the Minister assigned the subject of Public Administration, be temporarily appointed to the staff of the Reconciliation Office for such | Appointment of public officers to the staff of  the  Reconciliation  Office |

period as may be determined by the Reconciliation Office or with like consent, be permanently appointed to such staff.

(2) Where any officer in the public service is temporarily appointed to the staff of the Reconciliation Office, the provisions of subsection (2) of section 14 of the National Transport Commission Act, No. 37 of 1991 shall, *mutatis mutandis* apply to and in relation to such officer.

(3) Where any officer in the public service is permanently appointed to the staff of the Reconciliation Office, the provisions of subsection (3) of section 14 of the National Transport Commission Act, No. 37 of 1991 shall, *mutatis mutandis* apply to and in relation to such officer.

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PART IV

FINANCEANDREPORTING

Finances **13.** The State shall provide the Reconciliation Office with adequate funds to enable the Reconciliation Office to discharge the functions assigned to it by this Act. Such funds shall be charged on the Consolidated Fund.

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| Salaries of  members of the Reconciliation Office | **14.** The salaries of the members of the Reconciliation Office shall be determined by Parliament and be charged on the Consolidated Fund, and shall not be diminished during |

their terms of office.

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| Reconciliation  Office to raise  funds | **15.** The Reconciliation Office may raise funds – | |
| (*a*) | by obtaining grants, gifts or endowments from |

within Sri Lanka; and

(*b*) to achieve its mandate by obtaining grants, gifts or   
endowments from outside Sri Lanka:

Provided that, the funds under paragraph (*b*) shall be channeled through the Department of External Resources.

Financial year **16.**  (1) The financial year of the Reconciliation Office shall be the calendar year.

(2) The Reconciliation Office shall cause proper accounts to be kept of its income and expenditure, assets and liabilities.

(3) The accounts of the Reconciliation Office shall be audited by the Auditor General in terms of Article 154 of the Constitution.

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**17.** The Reconciliation Office shall submit annual reports Reporting including its audited accounts, to Parliament, and shall also   
cause such reports to be made public within a period of one   
month of such reports being submitted to Parliament.

PART V

GENERAL

**18.** (1) Any person who –Offences

(*a*) wrongfully resists or obstructs any person   
 authorised under this Act in the exercise of the   
 powers conferred on such person;

(*b*) wrongfully hinders or obstructs the Reconciliation   
 Office in the exercise, performance and discharge   
 of its powers, duties and functions; or

(*c*) willfully provides false information to the   
 Reconciliation Office,

commits the offence of contempt against the authority of the Reconciliation Office.

(2) Where the Reconciliation Office has reasonable grounds to believe that a person has committed the offence of contempt against the authority of the Reconciliation Office, the Reconciliation Office shall report such matter to the Court of Appeal. Every offence of contempt committed against the authority of the Reconciliation Office shall be punishable by the Court of Appeal as if it was an offence of contempt committed against the Court of Appeal.

**19.** (1) (*a*) No order, decision, act or omission of the Protection Reconciliation Office or any member, officer or servant from action

thereof shall be questioned in any proceedings or any court of law, save and except in proceedings under Article 126 or 140 of the Constitution.

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(*b*) The writ jurisdiction conferred on the Court of Appeal by Article 140 of the Constitution in relation to any order, decision, act or omission of the Reconciliation Office or any member, officer or servant thereof, shall be exercised by the Supreme Court and not by the Court of Appeal.

(2) Other than in the circumstances provided for in subsection (1) of this section –

(*a*) no proceedings civil or criminal, shall be instituted   
against any member of the Reconciliation Office or   
any officer or servant appointed to assist the   
Reconciliation Office, other than for contempt   
against the authority of the Reconciliation Office,   
for any act which in good faith is done or omitted   
to be done, by him, as such member or officer or   
servant;

(*b*) no proceedings civil or criminal, shall be instituted   
against any member of the Reconciliation Office in   
respect of any report made in good faith by the   
Reconciliation Office under this Act or against any   
other person in respect of the publication by such   
person of a true account of such report; and

(*c*) no proceedings civil, criminal or administrative,   
 shall be instituted against any person consequent,   
 to such person in good faith providing evidence or   
 documentation to the Reconciliation Office.

Rules **20.** (1) The Reconciliation Office may make rules for matters for which rules are required to be made under this Act.

(2) Every rule made under this Act shall be placed before Parliament and published in the *Gazette* within a reasonable period not exceeding three months.

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| **21.** The members of the Reconciliation Office (for the limited purpose of their functions under this Act) and the officers and servants shall be deemed to be public servants | Members & c. deemed to be  public servants |

for the purposes of the Penal Code (Chapter 19), the Anti-Corruption Act, No.9 of 2023 and the Evidence Ordinance (Chapter 14).

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| **22.** The Reconciliation Office shall be deemed to be a scheduled institution within the meaning of the Anti-Corruption Act, No.9 of 2023, and the provisions of that Act shall be construed accordingly.  **23.** (1) The Reconciliation Office may delegate to the Director-General, or any other member or officer thereof, | Reconciliation Office to be a scheduled  institution  Delegation of Powers |

any of its powers and functions.

(2) The Director-General, the member or officer to whom any of the powers or functions of the Reconciliation Office has been delegated shall exercise and perform such powers and functions subject to the general or specific directions of the Reconciliation Office.

**24.** Unless the context otherwise requires, in this Act -Interpretation

“Minister” means the Minister assigned the   
Reconciliation Office under Article 44 or 45 of the   
Constitution; and

“community based organisations” means non-profit or   
non-governmental organizations that operates at   
the grassroot level within a specific community or   
locality.

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| **25.** In the event of any inconsistency between the Sinhala and Tamil texts of this Act, the Sinhala text shall prevail. | Sinhala text to  prevail in case  of inconsistency |

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SCHEDULE [section 10(*c*)]

**Programmes to be comprised in the national action plan on**   
**reconciliation and coexistence**

1. Programmes to ensure reconciliation and coexistence that builds up awareness, peace and unity among all communities and follow up.

2. Programmes to promote and catalyze a multi-stakeholder effort to create a society that respects rule of law, fundamental rights, freedom, social obligations, mutual respect, non-discrimination, equity and diversity.

3. Programmes to establish a coherent network mechanism designed and established from regional level to the national level to promote dialogue, build consensus towards reconciliation and provide early warning and response to emerging conflicts.

4. Programmes to strengthen the governance, policies and curricula to promote reconciliation and social cohesion in the education system including schools, both public and private universities, tertiary and vocational education institutions.

5. Programmes to make psychosocial care and support system, including coordination, assessment, monitoring and evaluation strengthened to foster reconciliation among deprived communities.

6. Programmes to formulate a national action plan for preventing violent extremism, in consultation with the relevant Ministries and government departments and institutions.

7. Programmes to make recommendations to the Government on measures to be taken to resolve issues causing to stress and conflicts existed among different communities and implement such measures and follow up.

8. Programmes to formulate projects and programmes focused on social integration, education, conflict transformation, psychosocial supportive projects, arts and culture, awareness creation and socialization, economic engagement programmes under overall district development and local economic development plans, livelihood development plans with a special focus to women and youth integration.

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