

Frequently Asked Questions: Public Consultations on Truth, Justice and Reconciliation

1) Why has a consultation process on reconciliation mechanisms been established?

The Government is seeking suggestions from the public on proposed mechanisms to bring about reconciliation. These mechanisms are intended to establish truth, provide redress for violence and harm caused by Sri Lanka's conflicts, and ensure peaceful coexistence.

2) Are public consultations on reconciliation necessary?

Yes, because all the people of this country, especially victims, have a right to decide how we deal with our past and secure our future. Experiences of similar processes from other countries have shown that genuine participation of the public improves the likelihood of achieving truth, justice and reconciliation. Public consultation increases the chances that the future mechanisms will be meaningful and acceptable to victims and the wider Sri Lankan public.

3) How can you participate in the consultation process?

You can participate by:

(1) Sending in a written submission *via* post or email (a written submission can outline your suggestions for the mechanisms proposed by the Government or for any other mechanisms that you want to propose). Your submissions should be addressed to:

a) Via registered post:

Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu
Secretary, Consultations Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms
C/O SCRM, Republic Building, No: 01, Sir Baron Jayatilaka Mw.,
Colombo 01

b) Via email: ctf.srilanka@gmail.com

(2) Attending the public meetings that will be held in every district (where you can make verbal representations and submit documents if necessary)

(3) Sending in submissions anonymously via post if you or a group you belong to have concerns about safety or confidentiality. You may send your submissions to the address above.

4) What is the focus of the consultations?

The consultations will focus on mechanisms to be established for reconciliation. The Government has already stated that it will be considering the following mechanisms:

- 1) A Judicial Mechanism with a Special Counsel
- 2) A Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Non-Recurrence Commission
- 3) An Office of Reparations
- 4) An Office of Missing Persons

The Task Force is seeking suggestions on these and other mechanisms, processes and measures that would bring about justice, truth and reconciliation.

5) What can the consultation process do for you?

The consultation process cannot directly take action on any problem you face individually or as a group. For example, it does not have the power to conduct investigations, provide compensation or dispense justice. Therefore, the consultation process is not like previous commissions you may have attended or heard about. The process can, however, record and reflect your views on how grievances or past events should be dealt with so that the Government can design structures and processes that would bring about justice, truth and reconciliation. For example, you can submit suggestions on how investigations should be conducted and by whom, what reparations should be provided for different kinds of violations and what reforms (of institutions or laws for example) are required to ensure a just and peaceful future.

6) Who is conducting the process?

The Government has appointed eleven independent experts from civil society to design and oversee the consultations. This Consultation Task Force will be assisted by 15 Zonal Task Forces, which are comprised of locally respected and appropriately skilled persons from the relevant districts or provinces. The role of the members of these task forces is to record the views of the public without bias so that the full range of public views expressed is accurately reflected in the final consultation report.

7) Is this an independent consultation process?

The Consultation Task Force is established as an independent body to implement the consultation process. Its members have undertaken to carry out the task of consulting the public and reporting on consultation findings without influence from members of the Government or any other interested parties - whilst inviting all stakeholders to submit their views. The members of Zonal Task Forces who will carry out community-level consultations will also act impartially and independently. The consultation process will receive logistical, financial and institutional support from the *Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms*, which is an institution established by the Government. The members of the Consultation Task Force will not receive any payment by the Government for their work. An independent report on the consultation findings will be produced by the Consultation Task Force and presented to the Government for its consideration and action. It will also be made public.

8) How will the consultations be carried out?

In addition to seeking public views as detailed in the answer to Question 3, the Consultation Task Force will be holding public meetings in every district, conducting focus group discussions about locally-relevant issues and conducting individual interviews where required. The Task Force will also be seeking submissions from professional groups, the media, the security forces, religious groups and political parties at the national level.

9) When will the consultations be held?

The consultation process has already commenced with online submissions. The public meetings will be held in every district between May and June 2016. Exact dates and locations will be announced so that members of the public can make appointments for an allocated time or bring their submissions to the public meetings.

10) How will your submission be used and what will be the outcome of the consultations?

All submissions will be analyzed and compiled in a report that will reflect the full range of public views expressed. This report will be handed over to the Government and made public. The Consultation Task Force expects the Government to fulfil its commitment to designing and implementing the future reconciliation mechanisms, taking into consideration the views of the Sri Lankan public, especially the victims of Sri Lanka's conflicts.

The Consultation Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms prepared these responses to frequently asked questions about the consultation process.