

**Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs****FIRST MEETING OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON GENDER ISSUES (SGI) HELD IN KILINOCCHI 5-6 MARCH 2003****PRESS RELEASE
06 March 2003**

The first meeting of the Sub-Committee on Gender Issues (SGI) was held in Kilinochchi 5-6 March 2003. The establishment of the SGI was agreed upon by the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam during the third session of negotiations in Oslo 2-5 December 2002. During the meeting in Oslo both parties expressed their willingness to set up this Committee in order to secure the active participation of women and the effective inclusion of gender issues in the peace process.

The deliberations between the delegates were positive and constructive and included a wide range of issues of concern to women in this stage of the peace process. The Committee members acknowledged the widespread and profound suffering of women as a consequence of war, especially in the most affected areas. In their determination to include the gender perspective in the peace process they decided to focus their efforts on the following issues in the immediate and long term:

- Sustaining the peace process
- Resettlement
- Personal security and safety
- Infrastructure and services
- Livelihood and employment
- Political representation and decision-making
- Reconciliation

The SGI will report directly to the plenary session of the peace talks and work closely with the other Sub-Committees and other mechanisms associated with the peace process. It will identify issues of concern to women that need to be addressed and bring those concerns into the agenda of the peace process.

The SGI will immediately get involved with SIHRN in the process of Accelerated Resettlement Programme for the Jaffna District (ARP-J) and the Fast-track Resettlement Programme for the Mannar District (FTRP-M) and other ongoing resettlement programmes in the north and east.

The SGI supports SIHRN's project for traumatized women in Kilinochchi and strongly encourages SIHRN to set up similar centres in the east and in other districts affected by the conflict.

The SGI will formulate Gender Guidelines for the Sub-Committees and other mechanisms associated with the peace process.

The SGI decided to establish a Secretariat in Kilinochchi. An office of the SGI shall be established in Colombo. The two entities will co-operate closely in serving all members of the SGI in their work.

The SGI discussed fundamental elements of the Terms of Reference that will be presented to the plenary session of the peace talks in April 2003.

The Committee members visited several projects concerning the welfare of women in the Kilinochchi area.

The next meeting of the SGI will take place in Kilinochchi 4-5 April 2003. Future meetings of the SGI will be organised in different areas.

The Sub-Committee on Gender Issues consists of the following five members from each of the parties.

GOSL:
Dr. Kumari Jayawardena

Dr. Deepika Udagama
Dr. Fazeela M. Riyaz
Ms. Kumuduni Samuel
Ms. Faizun Zackariya

LTTE:

Ms. Thamilini Subramaniam
Ms. Kaaya Somasyndram
Ms. Premila Somasyndram
Ms. Suthamathy Sanmugarajah
Ms. Yalisai Balasingham

The parties have requested Norway to appoint a resource person as a facilitator to the SGI. The Norwegian government assigned Dr. Astrid N. Heiberg, a professor of psychiatry to the University of Oslo, and past president of the International Red Cross Federation.

