Thank you, Mr. Vice President.

The World Evangelical Alliance and Christian Solidarity Worldwide thank the High Commissioner for her report. We share with her the deep concerns at the aggravation of intercommunal tensions, and the consequent discrimination and bias attitude against Christian, Muslim and Hindu minorities.

We would like to bring to the attention of the High Commissioner the issue of registration of places of worship or religious bodies with the State.

In October 2008, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Moral Upliftment issued a circular requesting all future construction of any place of worship to be subject to prior permission of the Ministry.

The Circular’s wording allows the Ministry and local level government officials to make decisions to grant or deny permission based on their own understanding or biases.

Local level government authorities and law enforcement officials have used the 2008 Circular to curtail the rights of religious minorities and subject them to harassment. Evangelical Christian churches, prayer meetings and religious worship activities are routinely denied permission to function, due to the misapplication of this Circular.

The procedure prescribed by this Circular is inconsistent with principles of equality, non-discrimination and justice.

Therefore, we ask the High Commissioner if her office has addressed the said 2008 Circular with the Sri Lankan government.

And we urge the Sri Lankan government to withdraw this Circular, and to align its governance of construction of new places of worship with international human rights standards.