

A DAWN OF A NEW ERA OF THE OCEANS OR A RETURN TO THE GROTIAN OCEAN?

*Some reflections as the Law of The Sea Convention
enters into force*

BY A. ROHAN PERERA*

Dr. Joseph A. L. Cooray was elected in the early 1980's to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, an organ created by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to monitor the national measures undertaken by States parties to give effect to their obligations under the Covenant. Dr. Cooray completed his term of office as Vice-Chairman of this august body.

The esteem with which Dr. Cooray was held by his peers in the Committee was clearly manifest during the consideration of the Sri Lanka report under the Covenant in 1983. The interventions of members of the Committee on the Sri Lanka report were invariably preceded by glowing tributes to Dr. Cooray's invaluable contribution to the work of the Committee. The spirit of independence, integrity and the sense of detachment maintained by Dr. Cooray during the consideration of the Sri Lanka report, only served to enhance Dr. Cooray's stature as an "independent expert" in the full sense of that term as envisaged in the Covenant.

A reference to Dr. Cooray's contribution in United Nations Human Rights fora is not complete without mention of his pioneering work in the field of national and regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights.

A background paper on the subject of national and regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights prepared by Dr. Cooray, at the request of the UN Secretariat, served as the basic working document at the Regional Seminar on the subject convened by the Government of Sri Lanka in Colombo in June/July 1982 in response to UNGA Resolution 36/154 on National, Local and Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

At a time when significant developments in the establishment of national and regional institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights are taking place in the Asian Region, and Sri Lanka herself is on the threshold of establishing its own National Human Rights Commission, Dr. Cooray's pioneering contribution in this field must be duly recognised.

* Legal Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka ; Visiting Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Colombo. The views expressed herein are not necessarily the views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.