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PRESS COMMUNIQUE – MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY & COMMERCE, SRI LANKA – 06 DECEMBER, 2011

Sri Lanka thanks EU for strong livelihood support, invites top delegation for the mega show *Expo 2012*



Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Industry and Commerce of Sri Lanka (centre) meets the members of EU Parliament on 06 December at the Ministry of Industry & Commerce, Colombo 3 with Mr Tilak Collure, Secretary, Minister of Industry and Commerce (at left). The EU delegation members at right are (from left) Hon David Martin (Member of EU Parliament), Hon. Richard Howitt (Member of EU Parliament), Hon. Ms. Ana Gomes (Member of EU Parliament) and Ms. Brigitte Bataille (Policy Advisor & Assistant of S&D Party).

Sri Lanka is thankful for high EU support for various livelihood projects for the internally displaced, especially in the Northern and Eastern regions. Sri Lanka also invites high level trade, business and industry delegations from European Union for “Sri Lanka Expo 2012”, the mega export show of international scale to be held in Sri Lanka after 15 years said Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Industry and Commerce of Sri Lanka.

Minister Bathiudeen was addressing a visiting four member EU Parliamentary delegation representing the Socialists & Democrats Party (S&D) on 06 December at the Ministry of Industry & Commerce, Colombo 3. The EU delegation CONSISTED OF Hon David Martin (Member of EU Parliament), Hon. Richard Howitt (Member of EU Parliament), Hon. Ms. Ana Gomes (Member of EU Parliament) and Ms. Brigitte Bataille (Policy Advisor & Assistant of S&D Party).

According to the Department of Commerce under the Ministry of Industry & Commerce, the EU is Sri Lanka’s largest export destination. The total trade between the EU and Sri Lanka stood at US \$ 4,434 Million in 2010. The UK, Germany, Italy, Belgium, France and Sweden are the main EU member

countries investing in Sri Lanka. These countries have invested in diverse sectors such as apparels, hosiery, knitwear, surf sails, textile, electronic products, light engineering, rubber based products, (e.g. tyres), coir based products, gem and jewellery etc. The European Commission has been supporting vulnerable communities in Sri Lanka with humanitarian aid since 1992 and since the end of the conflict in 2009, the Commission provided a series of financing support. In 2010, the delegation of the European Union to Sri Lanka and the Maldives announced that the European Commission had adopted the Annual Action Plan (AAP) 2010 for Euro 16 million (Rs 2.4 billion) in grant assistance to Sri Lanka, allocating for livelihoods and community infrastructure support in the Northern and Eastern districts.

Briefing the delegation on Sri Lanka's progress on resettlement, rehabilitation and livelihoods of IDPs, Minister Bathiudeen said: "We have already provided livelihood training for former combatants through the successful efforts of Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training and will continue to assist them. For instance, on January 20, a special project will see many such individuals in Mannar District receiving livelihood support through the Divineguma project. We are also now discussing with donor agencies for more support for IDP livelihood assistance. In fact the National Enterprise Development Agency (NEDA) under my Ministry has also enlisted German government support through GIZ for SME entrepreneurs from this group."

"Among the activities that are immediately productive to the IDPs are agro, cottage and food processing sector activities" said Tilak Collure, Secretary, Minister of Industry and Commerce, addressing the delegation. "We have seen enthusiastic response from them after the success of small scale machinery (tractors etc) support project and value added agro products such as Papaya juice production too" Mr Collure added.

Minister Bathiudeen informed the visiting delegation that the members of Sri Lankan diaspora are also keen to return. "They want to invest here too" he added.

Responding to a query by Hon David Martin on Minister's views on the EU's GSP plus facility, Minister Bathiudeen said that resumption of EU's GSP plus to Sri Lanka would greatly boost Sri Lanka's resettlement and livelihood efforts. "It will certainly generate many more employment opportunities for North and Eastern regions as well" Minister stressed.

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Media

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