



EMBASSY OF SRI LANKA, BRUSSELS

Eurojust hosts tactical meeting on 'LTTE front organisations'

A Tactical Meeting on "LTTE Front Organisations", was hosted by Eurojust (the European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit responsible for co-ordination of investigations and prosecutions between competent authorities in the Member States), on 30-31 March 2009 in the Hague, Netherlands. The Meeting was attended by representatives of the Intelligence and Criminal Justice communities of EU member states, non-EU countries including Sri Lanka, and the Europol.

The participants were welcomed to the meeting by Mr. Jose Luis Lopes da Mota, President of Eurojust. The European Union Counter- Terrorism Coordinator Mr. Gilles de Kerchove, also attended the opening session. The participants were given a joint presentation on the current state of affairs by Eurojust/Europol on the LTTE and its criminal activities. Presentations were also made by several participating delegations, followed by workshops on best practices and lessons learned from criminal investigations and prosecutions, and on the best approach to address this type of terrorism.

Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the EU Ravinatha Arinasinha who delivered the keynote address on the theme "**Confronting False Dichotomies: the 'public good' and the challenge of meeting the 'terrorist front organization phenomenon' in Europe**", observed that contemporary counter-terrorism effort as an instrument for attaining peace, has been described as a global 'public good'. He said not only are front organizations a problem as they serve terrorists and contribute to

the mayhem they create, they also effectively exploit the generosity and decency of civic minded people. Additionally, they undermine financial systems, particularly at a time when they are already in deep crisis. He added that while 'LTTE front organizations' were the focus of the two day Eurojust deliberations, the 'terrorist front organization phenomenon' is not a Sri Lankan problem alone, but was a generic problem that affected all countries in the 'fight against terrorism'.

Noting that there are a number of modalities the world over that have been operationalized which provide for dealing with the problem of charities and other bodies serving as front organizations that contribute towards the perpetuation of terrorism, including –the UN's Security Council Resolutions 1267 and 1373, the US Executive Order 13224 and Sections of the UK's Terrorism Acts 2000 and 2006, Ambassador Aryasinha said that the EU lacked commensurate specific collective measures that sufficiently addressed the phenomenon of terrorist front organizations, with the efficacy that this 'moving target' demands. This seemed unfortunate for an institution that has been considerably pro-active in counter-terrorism and had even sought to extend the definition of 'terrorism' to include public provocation to commit terrorist offences, such as dissemination of terrorist propaganda through the internet.

The Ambassador said that 3 false dichotomies stood in the way of the EU helping evolve an effective regime that could help member states to grapple with this problem. First, for the purpose of being considered for listing as a terrorist entity, whether a group is merely under investigation or has been convicted; second, the manner in which the threat posed by terrorist entities is assessed by politicians interested in diaspora vote blocks, as opposed to that of the law enforcement/criminal justice communities who are better equipped to make such assessments; and third by pitting countering terrorism, against protection of freedom of expression. He said, while there should be no slackening in insisting that the due process is followed, urgent attention

should be paid by Europe when under the guise of freedom of expression, attempts are made to support/glorify terrorism.

He argued that notwithstanding its proscription as a terrorist entity within the EU since May 2006, the LTTE, through front organizations such as the TRO and Tamil Coordination Committee (TCC) has continued to circumvent the impositions placed on them. This was evidenced in recent prosecution of its members and freezing of assets within the EU - in the UK, France, Italy and Denmark. He called upon EU member states to scrutinize the financial statements submitted by LTTE front organizations such as the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), to verify whether the money collected ostensibly for post-tsunami relief and reconstruction projects in the North were actually used for the stated purposes, now that these areas have been cleared by the security forces and no evidence of such projects have been found. If it is clear that funds collected for charity have been laundered, EU states should hold such LTTE front organizations accountable and take action against them as terrorist front organizations.

Ambassador Aryasinha cautioned that despite their imminent defeat on the battlefield in Sri Lanka, it must be expected that the LTTE will continue to metamorphose abroad. Members of the LTTE and its fronts, capitalizing on their well connected network and expertise, are likely to engage in clandestine businesses or in criminal activities for other terrorist organizations, in order to survive. The Ambassador who called on the EU to list the TRO and other associated LTTE front organizations as terrorist entities, said that failure to take urgent action to arrest this trend in Europe immediately, would not be in the self interest of the EU member states.

The Sri Lanka delegation to the seminar, included representatives from the Ministry of Defence and the Attorney General's Department of Sri Lanka.

Embassy of Sri Lanka

Brussels, Belgium

31 March 2009