



**THE EMBASSY OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA
TO BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG AND THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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Delegation of Senior Officials visits Brussels

A delegation of senior officials of the Government of Sri Lanka consisting of the Attorney General, the Hon. Mohan Pieris P.C., Secretary of the Ministry of Finance & Planning, Dr. P.B. Jayasundera, Secretary of the Ministry of Justice & Law Reforms, Mr. Suhada Gamalath and the Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Romesh Jayasinghe is at present in Brussels.

The visit of the delegation takes place in the context of the current post-conflict scenario, in which the Government of Sri Lanka is committed to being strongly engaged with the international community, including Sri Lanka's key trade and economic partners. It would be recalled in this regard that the Hon. Basil Rajapaksa, Senior Advisor to the President had held discussions in Brussels last September with the Commissioner for External Relations of the European Commission (EC) and other senior European Union (EU) personalities. Thereafter the Deputy Director-General for External Relations of the EC Mr. Stefano Sannino was in Sri Lanka in early November, 2009.

The delegation met on 15th March with EC Trade Commissioner Mr. Karel De Gucht. This was followed by an in-depth and substantive discussion on GSP+ related concerns with the officials handling Trade and External Relations matters in the Commission. The delegation pointed out that Sri Lanka has a long-standing democratic tradition. It is therefore inevitable that with the end of the extraordinary situation of terror faced by Sri Lanka for almost three decades, there would now follow a progressive return to normalcy accompanied by on-going efforts towards the further strengthening of good governance, while having regard to transitional law enforcement and security challenges. This return to normalcy in turn provides a necessary basis for a continuing engagement with the European Union. In fact, there has already been palpable progress on several areas such as the re-settlement of the Internally Displaced and the rehabilitation of those conscripted as child soldiers.

In their discussions on 15 March 2010, the Sri Lanka delegation and the EC officials focused on identifying the specific areas that need to be addressed. The delegation further added that Sri Lanka envisages a methodology of work, that would best permit the issues to be addressed in a purposeful manner.

The delegation also met with Dr. Peter Zangl, the Director General of ECHO which is the Humanitarian Aid arm of the European Commission. The Sri Lanka delegation thanked ECHO for their continuous support in the past years. While briefing the Director General on the current situation in Sri Lanka, it was underlined that "the humanitarian catastrophe" predicted by some quarters in the aftermath of the end of the conflict situation was successfully averted, followed-by an equally successful re-settlement of the bulk of the Internally Displaced. The remaining 70,000 persons in the Welfare Villages are awaiting the completion of demining to return to their homes. The facilities provided to those re-settled were also detailed, while areas of possible future needs were highlighted. In a meeting with Mr. Robert Cooper, Director General for External and Politico-Military Affairs of the European Council, the delegation underlined the importance Sri Lanka attaches to widening and deepening her ties with the European Union. The meeting with Mr. Gilles De Kerchove, who is the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator of the Council of the European Union, was used to stress the importance of the EU taking action to list the TRO, TCC and other known LTTE front organizations operating on European soil.

The delegation met with Madam Louise Arbour, President of the International Crisis Group (ICG) and former High Commissioner for Human Rights of the UN. The delegation briefed the ICG President of the many positive economic and political developments taking place in Sri Lanka, with the end of the conflict situation.

The delegation during the rest of its stay will meet with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) serving on the Foreign Affairs and International Trade Committees of the European Parliament, the Human Rights Sub Committee, the South Asia delegation of the Parliament and the 'Friends of Sri Lanka' group.

The delegation will travel to Luxembourg to call on Vice-Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Jean Asselborn and to have bi-lateral consultations at the Luxembourg Foreign Ministry. Similar bi-lateral consultations have already taken place in Brussels with the Belgian Foreign Ministry.

The delegation is assisted in its meetings by Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha, Ambassador of Sri Lanka in Brussels and his staff.

Sri Lanka Embassy
Brussels

16 March 2010