

**PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE 'FRIENDS OF SRI LANKA' OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT – 17 March 2010**

**Friends meet with Foreign Secretary Jayasinghe**

Senior Sri Lankan officials today (17 March) continued their meetings with European politicians and officials. Foreign Secretary Romesh Jayasinghe and Justice Secretary Suhada Gamlath were welcomed to the European Parliament by 'Friends of Sri Lanka' from many nations and political groups.

The meeting focussed on post-conflict developments in Sri Lanka, as well as the concerns related to Sri Lanka's GSP+ status. Geoffrey Van Orden, British Conservative MEP and Chairman of the 'Friends of Sri Lanka' group, commented:

"We congratulate the Sri Lankan government and security forces on successfully bringing decades of terrorist violence to an end. All Sri Lankans can now look forward to a new era of peace and prosperity.

"However, it is important that terror never takes root in Sri Lanka again and that its seed bed of disenchantment within parts of the Tamil community is replaced with a new and hopeful commitment to national unity, reconstruction and mutual respect. We shall give you every support in this endeavour - we will encourage international assistance for Sri Lanka. And we shall do all that we can to ensure that our national authorities are vigilant in clamping down on those that continue to raise funds for the LTTE and fan the embers of violence and hostility.

"We are confident that the Government of Sri Lanka will move rapidly to address any remaining human rights concerns and the needs of all its peoples.

"We strongly opposed the removal of Sri Lanka's GSP+ status. However, we now have to deal with a new situation and urge the Government to take every step to forestall the actions of those that lack sympathy and understanding of Sri Lanka's years of torment and difficulty.

"We encourage a rapid return to normalcy and constructive engagement with the EU."

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