



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

**Sri Lanka says ensuring continued free market access to seafood products a tangible way for Europe to help North-East economic recovery**

Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the EU Ravinatha Aryasinha has said "ensuring continued free market access to Sri Lankan seafood products was a tangible way for Europe to help the economic recovery in the North & East of Sri Lanka". He noted that since the ending of LTTE terrorism that had dominated the region over the past 3 decades less than a year ago, more than 2/3rds of Sri Lanka's coastline which had previously seen many restrictions due to security concerns had been re-opened to normal fishing activity. Today, the fisheries sector had become a key source of livelihood to the people of the North & East and it was the expectation of the Government that the region provided considerable scope for expansion of seafood exports industry capacity which could serve as an engine of growth in an area which had seen little development in the recent past.

Ambassador Aryasinha made these observations at a presentation on "The Seafood Industry in Sri Lanka" held on the sidelines of the European Seafood Exposition, the world's largest B2B seafood fair held in Brussels from 27 – 29 April 2010. Six leading Sri Lankan seafood exporting companies participated in the exposition attended by over 200,000 buyers and sellers from 140 countries.

Mrs. Jeevani Siriwardena, Director, Sri Lanka Export Development Board who made a presentation titled "The EU & Sri Lanka's Seafood Industry" said, the seafood exports though a relatively small scale industry is important to the Sri Lankan economy as over one million people were directly and indirectly employed in the fishery sector. She said nearly 70% of Sri Lanka's seafood exports come to Europe and that it had grown fourfold between 2004 – 2009. This had been made possible due to the acceptability of the high quality fish products from Sri Lanka exported to the European consumers and in compliance with standards set out by the EU. She noted that Sri Lanka is the market leader in yellow fin tuna imported by the EU, enjoying 40% of the market share. Mrs. Siriwardena said the six exhibitors participating in the fair attracted immediate orders worth over US \$ 1.5 million during the three-day exposition from 60 new contacts established. This represents a fourfold increase when compared to the orders secured by Sri Lankan exporters at the same exposition last year.

Mr. Prabash Subasinghe, Secretary, Sri Lanka Seafood Exporters' Association and CEO, Global Seafood who participated in the briefing on behalf of the industry, said Seafood exporters had invested around Euro ten million to upgrade their processing centres to meet EU approval with BRC and IFS certification. Two EU delegations that had visited Sri Lanka had approved 27 of the 35 fish processing centres in Sri Lanka. Mr. Subasinghe who during their stay in Brussels had led a delegation of seafood exporters for a meeting with the European Commission said they had made clear that non-extension of GSP+ will have a potential fallout on the industry and hoped that this could be averted. He said that the current GSP+ utilisation by Sri Lanka in the seafood export sector is 99.3%, which is a clear success story not only for Sri Lanka, but also for the GSP+ scheme. He also emphasized that there had been a 200% increase in the supplies from the Eastern Province alone and that exporters were presently investing considerable resources to revive processing centres in the region.

Dr. Dayaratna Silva, Minister (Economic & Commercial) was associated in the presentation, while Sri Lankan exporters participating in the exposition, buyers of Sri Lankan products and members of the media participated.

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