

Sri Lanka now looks to future with renewed hope and enthusiasm - President at NAM

For 27 long years my people were gripped by mortal fear. A great sigh of relief has now swept across the entire nation being finally released from the grip of the fear of terrorism. The Sri Lankan Nation now looks to the future with renewed hope and enthusiasm. We have faith that all our friends who stood by us in our hour of need will continue to stand by us and walk with us in our journey to develop Sri Lanka for the benefit of all our people, said President Mahinda Rajapaksa in his statement at the 15th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement being held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt today July 15.

"I am proud to announce that my country has succeeded in eliminating one of the most brutal terrorist groups in the world. This group was not a liberation movement but an anti-national separatist cult that glorified violence. Sadly they were able to propagate their cult of violence and hatred in some countries which, for understandable but unjustifiable political reasons, seemed less than forthright in their opposition to terrorism that did not seem to threaten them", the President added.

"Our Government is aware that defeating a terrorist group does not solve the underlying grievances of our people. We are therefore now dealing with these issues. First and foremost, we are engaged in attending to the needs of the 287,000 civilians who were held hostage by the terrorists and liberated by our Security Forces. Our goal is to quickly return the displaced to their homes and to restore their livelihoods.

The needs of the displaced are substantial, and we welcome and thank all those in the international community who have offered us assistance. I take this opportunity to thank the United Nations, and the Secretary General in particular who visited Sri Lanka and extended UN assistance. I also thank those countries that have given generously to benefit our people who suffered for so long with no one to speak for them when under terrorist domination", the President added.

Referring to the world financial and economic crises, President Rajapaksa said: "The world is today confronted by a crisis that is essentially the creation of the financial markets of certain developed countries. As a consequence of his financial crisis, our development agenda is challenged; our exports are crippled; our industries are suffering from a lack of confidence; and we face an externally induced liquidity shortfall. It is unfortunate that many countries of the developing world, which largely with their own resources climbed up the ladder of development, are adversely affected and even penalized in this manner due to the global financial crisis which was not of their own making".