

Media Release

FM hails victory at Human Rights Council

Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama has hailed Sri Lanka's resounding victory at the Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva yesterday (27 May 2009), calling it "an unambiguous and emphatic endorsement by the international community of the Sri Lankan Government's strategy to defeat terrorism and its pursuit of peace and reconciliation within the framework of a Sri Lankan agenda, as embodied in the Mahinda Chinthana,". He said that this victory is a tribute by the world at large to the wise leadership of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who has succeeded in steering the country out of turbulent waters into an era of lasting peace and prosperity.

The Minister further stated that the vote on the resolution submitted by Sri Lanka, titled "Assistance to Sri Lanka in the promotion and protection of human rights", supported by 29 countries, with 12 voting against and 6 abstentions in the 47 member Council clearly reflected the undeniable fact that the overwhelming majority of humanity is solidly behind Sri Lanka. He pointed out that this historic victory at the premier international forum on human rights is also a rejection of the attempts by certain elements to denigrate the successful accomplishment of the great humanitarian mission undertaken by the valiant Sri Lankan security forces to liberate the people of the North and the East from the tyranny of LTTE control. He also noted that this vote underscores the strong support for Sri Lanka within the international community for its ongoing plans to provide maximum assistance and facilities to the large number of IDPs, who had been forcibly displaced by the LTTE during the conflict period, and the expeditious resettlement of these people in their original places of habitation within the shortest possible time.

The Minister said that he was greatly encouraged by the commendation of the Council for the measures taken by the Government of Sri Lanka to address the urgent needs of the IDPs. The resolution had stressed that in the aftermath of the conclusion of hostilities, the priority in terms of human rights remains the provision of necessary assistance to ensure relief and rehabilitation of persons affected by the conflict, including the IDPs, as well as the reconstruction of Sri Lanka's economy and infrastructure. It also welcomed the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers in the Eastern Province.

The Foreign Minister emphasized that the passage of the resolution in Geneva, reaffirmed the respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Sri Lanka and its sovereign rights to protect its citizens and combat terrorism, while condemning all attacks that the LTTE had unleashed on the civilian population and its practice of using civilians as human shields.

The resolution also welcomed President Rajapaksa's commitment to a political solution, with the implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution to bring about lasting peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Minister Bogollagama expressed his sincere thanks and profound appreciation to all friendly countries which had rallied round Sri Lanka at this crucial juncture, in supporting the resolution tabled by Sri Lanka, as well as both member states and observers, whose Permanent Representatives in Geneva had spoken passionately in favour of Sri Lanka. He recognized the efforts of his Cabinet colleague, Mahinda Samarasinghe, Minister of Disaster Management & Human Rights and the entire team at the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka in Geneva, headed by Ambassador Dr. Dayan Jayatilleka, as well as the pivotal role played by Sri Lankan Missions abroad in effectively articulating Sri Lanka's position to their respective capitals, which had secured this outstanding victory for the country. The Minister himself had personally telephoned many of his counterparts represented in the Human Rights Council and sought their support for Sri Lanka, which has now been manifested in the outcome in Geneva.

The Minister also commended his Deputy Minister, Hussein A. Bhaila for his untiring efforts in meeting and briefing several delegations at the recently concluded 36th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Damascus.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Colombo

28 May 2009