

**Full text of Statement by MEP Charles Tannock, Conservative Foreign Affairs
Spokesman, at the debate on the Urgency resolution on the ‘Situation in Sri
Lanka’ at the European Parliament , Strasbourg, 5 February 2009**

"The EU must be vigilant against LTTE militants who attempt to seek asylum in Europe. Throughout this ferocious twenty-six year civil war the LTTE has pioneered atrocious terrorist tactics. While we support the government's offer of amnesty for the majority of LTTE, it is vital that no-one responsible for the most serious war crimes is allowed to get away with impunity. Sri Lanka's bloody civil war seems finally to be coming to a conclusion. The LTTE, which has been blacklisted by the EU as a terrorist organization, must now surely lay down its arms and surrender. The EU and other co-chairs have urged the LTTE to do so. The LTTE's response will show us whether it really has the best interests of Tamils at heart. The LTTE is using its front organizations in Europe to maximum propaganda effect and raising money by extortion internationally. Some LTTE militants may try to seek asylum in Europe. Throughout this ferocious twenty-six year civil war the LTTE has pioneered atrocious terrorist tactics such as suicide bombings that are now used in many other parts of the world. The Sri Lankan army has therefore had to deploy all means at its disposal to counteract this brutal insurgency but its clear that the casualty figures have been exaggerated and some e.g. the AP story of 300 civilians killed has now been withdrawn as the supposed author subsequently denied authorship. Nevertheless the death of civilians in a war zone is tragic whenever and wherever it occurs. Clearly the Sri Lankan armed forces cannot claim an unblemished record, but they have not sought to deliberately exploit civilians and put them in harm's way like the LTTE has allegedly done. If the war really is soon to be over, it is essential that Sri Lanka turns its attentions to post-conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The marginalization of Tamils at the expense of the majority Sinhalese needs to be addressed in an urgent and permanent manner to ensure a stable and sustainable multi-ethnic society with regional devolution. The EU should also ensure resources are at Sri Lanka's disposal to support post-conflict development. Although we should support the government's offer of amnesty for the majority of LTTE, it is vital that no-one responsible for the most serious war crimes is allowed to get away with impunity."