

Sri Lanka calls on EU to list TRO and other LTTE front organizations

Foreign Secretary Dr. Palitha Kohona on Wednesday (11.06.2008) called upon the European Union to list the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) and other LTTE front organizations, which have been clearly identified, including by the US government, as raising funds for the LTTE. He said a request to this effect has recently been made by the Sri Lankan Government to the European Union. He made this appeal at the Sri Lanka – EU discussion on “The Fight Against Terrorism”, in Colombo (11 June 2008) following the Sri Lanka – EC Joint Commission meeting.

The Ambassador of France in Sri Lanka, Michel Lummaux, representing the current EU Presidency held by Slovenia, who led the EU delegation categorically expressed the opposition of the European Union (EU) to a separate state for Tamils in Sri Lanka. He further said that the EU does not consider the LTTE to be the sole representative of Sri Lankan Tamils. The French Ambassador elaborating further on the EU stand on Sri Lanka, stated that the EU supported Sri Lanka’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and that the grievances of minority communities must be addressed within this contextual framework. Whatever solution that is formulated should have “democratic sanction”, in that the settlement should be acceptable to the people of Sri Lanka.

Dr. Kohona who led the Sri Lankan delegation at the discussion said that Sri Lanka is committed to a negotiated and sustainable settlement to the conflict and gave a comprehensive briefing to the EU delegation on the large scale fund raising by the LTTE and its front organizations abroad, including through intimidation and extortion, which sustains the operational capability of the LTTE to kill innocent civilians and cause extensive economic damage in Sri Lanka. He pointed out that the LTTE maintained a highly sophisticated and elaborate network of fronts globally, often under the innocent guise of charities, sports, religious and cultural associations, which did not attract much attention of host governments.

The Foreign Secretary said that there is a comprehensive body of credible evidence linking the LTTE to trans-national crimes, including money laundering, narcotics trafficking, arms smuggling and the trafficking of persons. In this regard, he cited the organized racket to smuggle people to Australia and the major credit card scam in the UK. He also mentioned that the LTTE has continued to terrorize people in Sri Lanka, particularly Tamils, as well as the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, especially living in North America, Europe and Australia to raise funds.

Dr. Kohona while appreciating the action already taken by the EU to proscribe the LTTE, emphasized the need for further measures to give practical effect to the ban on the LTTE, by initiating legal action and other measures against identified front organizations, which constitute the overseas support network of the LTTE terrorist infrastructure in Sri Lanka. In this context, he referred to the request made by the Sri Lankan authorities to the European Union for the listing of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), which has been clearly identified even by the US Government as a front to facilitate fund raising and for the procurement of weapons by the LTTE. The Foreign Secretary greatly appreciated the action by some countries in the EU such as France and the UK, which have launched criminal prosecutions against known LTTE operatives.

The French Ambassador in response stated that the EU acknowledged that the LTTE is a terrorist organization which exercises fascist control over two districts in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka and has been responsible for the ethnic cleansing of the entire Muslim population from the North in

October 1990. He assured Sri Lanka of the EU's total support in its fight against terrorism.

Both sides agreed on the need for a sustained dialogue, inter alia which would entail the exchange of information and intelligence, training of law enforcement personnel and capacity building of institutions which are involved in combating terrorism.

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