



**THE EMBASSY OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA  
TO BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG AND THE EUROPEAN UNION  
27, RUE JULES LEJEUNE, 1050 BRUSSELS, BELGIUM**

## **‘Sri Lanka: Facets of Post-Conflict Development’ Photographic Exhibition inaugurated at the European Parliament**

Chairman of the Northern Task Force for Resettlement, Development and Security in the Northern Province and Senior Adviser to the President Basil Rajapaksa, MP, together with the Vice-President of the European Parliament Dr. Libor Rouček, inaugurated a photographic exhibition titled ‘Sri Lanka: Facets of Post-conflict Development’ at the European Parliament in Brussels on Wednesday (30 September). The exhibition was conceptualized and organized by the Sri Lanka Embassy in Brussels, with the sponsorship of Mrs. Elisabetta Gardini, MEP and the ‘Friends of Sri Lanka’ group in the European Parliament. Members of the European Parliament, members of the diplomatic corps from EU member countries and SAARC, officials of the European institutions and a representative gathering of Sri Lankans living in Belgium and friends of Sri Lanka, participated in the event.

The exhibition consists of 34 photo panels in 5 sub categories - the Impact of terrorism in Sri Lanka, Humanitarian operation and ensuring the welfare of those displaced, Re-settlement of the displaced, Livelihood and infrastructure development and the Way forward.

In her opening remarks MEP Gardini who belongs to the European People’s Party (EPP) said, the aim of the exhibition was to demonstrate the success of Sri Lanka’s advancement in its path to peaceful development and wellbeing of the people. She said at this juncture the close cooperation between the European Parliament and the Government of Sri Lanka would be extremely important.

Recalling the memories of his visit to Sri Lanka more than 25 years ago, Vice President Rouček a member of the Socialist and Democrats group (S&D) said “in this exhibition you can see pain and suffering on one hand and hope on the other”. He said that in Europe after a bloody conflict during the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war the people demonstrated that they were able to rebuild lives and rebuild their future. He said he spoke about hope, “because in the pictures here you will see hope”. He stressed that since peace is prevailing in all Sri Lanka, the reconstruction could be done without any hindrance and the EU and the European Parliament could help in this process.

In his keynote address, Mr. Basil Rajapaksa outlined the work being done in relation to the re-settlement of those displaced and to rebuild the areas affected by the conflict which had been neglected for 30 years. He said Sri Lanka’s development agenda is based on President Mahinda Rajapaksa’s election manifesto the “Mahinda Chintana” and demilitarization, democracy and development will be the corner stones of Northern development and political solutions will bring lasting peace. He said de-militarization had been successfully achieved, the extent of development taking place was visible, people’s representatives have been elected in the North while a lot of democratic activity was taking place. He said the EU’s continued support in this regard is very important, and invited the EU and the European Parliament to strengthen Sri Lanka in its endeavor to rebuild the country.

Speaking on behalf of the 'Friends of Sri Lanka' Group, Dr. Charles Tannock MEP of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), recalled the inception of the Friends of Sri Lanka Group of the European Parliament as a cross party, cross nationality group, "to avert the propaganda which particularly came from the UK, shamefully by the apologists for the Tamil Tiger Terrorists". He said "we should give Sri Lanka a helping hand and not punish it and beat it down", and "we must support Sri Lanka to get the GSP + concession".

In his address, Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the EU [Ravinatha Aryasinha](#) noted that among those invited, cutting across party lines in the European Parliament were "some of Sri Lanka's staunchest supporters, as well as her harshest critics". He said "based on one's pre-disposition towards Sri Lanka, each will view the panels in this exhibition, differently. Some may view it as a glass half full. Others may view it as a glass half empty. But, so long as we can appreciate that much has been done, that the remaining challenges are real, and that they have and will require considerable effort to overcome –we can commence the journey of restoring normalcy to the lives of these people". The Ambassador expressed the hope that the exhibition would "serve as a 'catalyst' in encouraging a constructive engagement, so that the Parliament, other institutions of the European Union, as well as its member states could engage with Sri Lanka in a positive spirit".

During his stay in Brussels, Mr. Basil Rajapaksa also met with European External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner. Mr. Rajapaksa briefed the Commissioner in detail regarding the government's effort to assist the displaced and to ensure their re-settlement. Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner while impressing on the need for speedy re-settlement of the displaced, was supportive of the government's initiatives relating to the IDP resettlement programme and development priorities in the North. The Commissioner indicated that the EU will extend greater assistance. Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the EU [Ravinatha Aryasinha](#) and Secretary to the Treasury Dr. P.B. Jayasundera were associated with Mr. Rajapaksa at the meeting.

Embassy of Sri Lanka  
Brussels

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