

Plenary Session, Strasbourg 19-22 October 2009
Resolution on Sri Lanka – 22 Oct. 2009

Transcript of Mr. Geoffrey Van Orden, ECR/UK

The people of Sri Lanka - Sinhalese and particularly Tamils - have suffered enormously over these past 30 years from a ruthless terrorist campaign conducted by the LTTE.

Now that the LTTE have been defeated in the field, the Government and people of Sri Lanka need our sympathetic understanding and, above all, our assistance as they try to set their country once more on the path of recovery and prosperity and prevent any resurgence of terrorism.

This is a time for helping Sri Lanka not adding to its difficulties. There are those, including LTTE apologists, that want to deliver a further blow to the Sri Lankan people by undermining the "GSP+" preferential trade arrangements with the EU. I hope the European Commission understands that it is trade, not aid, that offers the best route to economic recovery. For their part, the Sri Lankan authorities need to address the concerns expressed by friends in the international community so that there is no excuse for GSP+ status to be compromised.

The immediate priority is to resettle those thousands of Tamil civilians caught up in the conflict and now being held in poor conditions in camps. Their processing needs to take place with all urgency and the international community should be invited to help.

At the same time, the government needs to be generous and pro-active in addressing the concerns of its Tamil citizens so that the Tamil peoples also see the defeat of the LTTE as a liberation.

Unfortunately, just as the LTTE faced defeat in Sri Lanka, we have seen a growth of LTTE support activities among the Tamil diaspora in European countries. European governments, working closely with the Sri Lankan authorities, need to deal with this problem and also ensure that terrorist cadres and support elements do not enter European countries as refugees.

Transcript of Dr. Charles Tannock, ECR/UK

President, as a representative of London, a city that has repeatedly been for target for terrorists in the past 40 years, I have a great deal of sympathy with Sri Lankans of all ethnicities.

The terrorism campaign waged by the Tamil Tigers severely blighted the development to this beautiful country. President Rajapaksa came to power democratically, determined to defeat the LTTE, and his success should be congratulated by all of us who despise terrorism.

The government now has the responsibility of building a post-conflict society, with liberty, justice and equality for all Sri Lankans. Returning the IDPs home and trying the war criminals, must now be the government's priority. While I can see that President Rajapaksa may have lost some international good will through some of his emergency actions in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, I am convinced that the best way forward is when we guarantee the development of a secure and prosper Sri Lanka and support its democratically elected leader and its government. The EU must maintain the GSP+ trade agreements which if lost will directly destroy one million jobs and indirectly economically impact on 2.5 million innocent Sri Lankan citizens.

Thank you.