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Foreign Minister Bogollagama reaffirms to EU Presidency Sri Lanka's abiding commitment to civilian safety in the north

Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Bogollagama reaffirmed Sri Lanka's total commitment to the safety and security of civilians in the conflict area in the north and stated that the government military action is only aimed at empowering people through a political process.

The Minister made this observation when he met the Presidency of the European Union (EU) represented by the Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic Mr. Karrel Schwarzenberg in Brussels on Tuesday (27 January 2009). The meeting requested by Sri Lanka with the Czech Republic which assumed the EU Presidency since January 2009 was aimed at providing a briefing on the situation in the north & east discussing the extension of the GSP+ facility, Sri Lanka's request to the EU to list the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) and other LTTE front organizations and cooperation between the EU and Sri Lanka. Matters of bilateral interest between Sri Lanka and Czech Republic were also discussed.

Minister Schwarzenberg welcoming Minister Bogollagama to Brussels congratulated the Sri Lanka government over its recent military success in the north. While expressing hope that Sri Lanka would soon return to normalcy, he underlined the importance the EU attached to the safety and security of civilians. The Czech Minister also announced the readiness of the EU to assist Sri Lanka in post conflict restoration in the cleared areas of the north & east. Minister Schwarzenberg also underlined the urgency for a political solution to be found to the conflict.

Minister Bogollagama thanking his counterpart for his encouraging endorsement on the success of Sri Lanka in its struggle against terrorism stated that the government would continue to pursue its goal of dismantling the LTTE structures and activities at home and abroad. He also outlined President Mahinda Rajapaksa's determination to find a political solution to the present conflict through constitutional means. Minister Bogollagama also drew his counterpart's attention to the successful restoration of democracy and civil administration in the East. Describing the renouncement of violence and commitment given to adhere to democratic practice by some former LTTE leaders as a positive sign, Minister Bogollagama affirmed that the government would soon restore normalcy in the north using the experience gained from the East.

Highlighting the increased activities of the LTTE Front organizations such as the TRO in Europe following the EU ban on the LTTE in 2006, Minister Bogollagama called on the Czech Presidency to lead other member countries towards eradicating the activities of the LTTE and its agents in Europe. He highlighted Sri Lanka's concern that the LTTE,

which is facing a major defeat in Sri Lanka, would be given a lifeline through front Organizations.

On the question of perceived impunity, especially against the attacks on the Sri Lankan media, Foreign Minister Bogollagama appraised Minister Schwarzenberg that investigations have begun on every complaint made and conclusions are nearing in some high profile cases. He also underlined the need for cautious assessment, as there are some allegations propagated by the LTTE and other elements hostile to the Government.

Confirming the fulfillment of Sri Lanka's commitments over the GSP facility, Minister Bogollagama expressed Sri Lanka's disapproval on the intrusive process on the extension of the GSP plus facility. He called on the Czech Presidency's support for an early resolution of this issue.

The Czech Minister expressed his government's keenness to strengthen SAARC-EU cooperation during their Presidency and discussed ways and means through which this can be achieved.

Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the EU Ravinatha Aryasinha, Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the Czech Republic based in Vienna M. M. Jaffeer and Director General (Europe and CIS) Mrs. Kshenuka Senewiratne were associated with the Foreign Minister at the meeting with the Czech Foreign Minister.

Embassy of Sri Lanka

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