



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

TEL: (00322)3445394. (00322)3445585 FAX: (00322)3446737 EMAIL: secretariat@sriankaembassy.be

Belgolux - Sri Lanka Business Council Re-launched

The re-launch of the Belgolux - Sri Lanka Business Council (BSBC) took place under the patronage of visiting Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama, on 27 January 2008 at the Hotel Conrad in Brussels, in the presence of an audience that represented trade chambers, foreign trade associations, banks, investment fund organizations and Belgian companies who currently maintain trade, travel and investment links with Sri Lanka.

Addressing the gathering Minister Bogollagama, who emphasized the consistency of Sri Lanka's trade and investment climate created as far back as 1977, and the resilience shown despite a conflict situation, said soon with the defeat of terrorism the economy will receive a tremendous boost. He urged Belgian companies to take full advantage of this new development and to benefit from Sri Lanka's location and connectivity, particularly in terms of market access to the vast Indian-subcontinent covering over 1.5 billion consumers, through free trade agreements that provide tariff concession for more than 5500 products entering the Indian and Pakistani markets.

Mr. Ashroff Omar, CEO of Brandix Ltd, representing Sri Lankan private sector, said the EU has today emerged as Sri Lanka's main export market and added that the recent surge in exports to the EU is mainly attributed to the GSP + duty free concessions. Welcoming the re-launching of the BSBC, he said JAAF will continue to work with the government and the Embassy in order to promote industry in Sri Lanka, resulting in a very successful business model for Sri Lanka.

Earlier welcoming the gathering, Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the EU Ravinatha Aryasinha said the decision to re-launch the BSBC, originally formed in 1997, but which had been dormant for many years, was aimed at seizing the opportunity to promote mutual business interests

between Belgium/ Luxemburg and Sri Lanka to exploit untapped trade and investment potential, at a time the country was ready to once again “ economically take off”.

The newly appointed President of the Council Mr. Guido Vandermarliere, is one of the leading Belgian investors in Sri Lanka, having established a tobacco processing plant more than 25 years, while Mr. Eddy Tondeur, elected as the vice-president is from Trelleborg wheel system – the world largest producer of resilient rubber tyres- whose main manufacturing plant is located in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka’s Hony. Consul in Belgium Mrs. Monique de Décker took office as the Secretary of the BSBC.

The Foreign Minister also formally launched the website of the Sri Lanka Embassy in Brussels – a long felt need - in providing commercial information, as well as speedily and strategically communicating updates on political and socio-economic developments in Sri Lanka to local audiences. It can be accessed at <http://www.srilankaembassy.be/>

Earlier in the week, Minister Bogollagama also addressed a representative gathering of the Brussels based Sri Lanka community at a reception organized at the ‘Sri Lanka Residence’. The Minister briefed them on the efforts underway by the Government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa to usher in a new era of peace and prosperity in Sri Lanka, and urged them to leverage their capabilities to promote Sri Lanka in Belgium, Luxembourg and within the European Union.

Embassy of Sri Lanka
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