



EU News

*From
Sri Lanka
And the Maldives*



IN THIS ISSUE

- Decision by the ECJ concerning the listing of the LTTE
- Decision of the European Commission to ban imports of fisheries products from Sri Lanka
- Celebration of the 25 years of the Fall of the Berlin Wall
- Third EU-Asia Dialogue on migration
- Signature of the EUNIC convention
- European Film Festival 2014
- EU-Funded Housing Projects
 - ❖ Mission to visit EU-Funded projects in the North and East
 - ❖ Presentation of the EU-Funded housing programme
- EU support to the plantation communities
- World Day Against Death Penalty
 - ❖ Film screening at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies
 - ❖ EU Policy Against Death Penalty
- Meeting with the European Investment Bank
- EU-Sri Lanka Investment Dialogue
- Signature of the lease agreement with the British High Commission
- Light on Erasmus Mundus
- Interviews of the new colleagues at the EU Delegation



Condolences of the EU Ambassador to the victims of the Koslanda landslide

EU Ambassador, H.E. David Daly :

"My profound sympathy goes out to the victims of the tragic landslide in Haldumulla, to their families and especially to the children.

The response of the Government and non-governmental sector has been impressive, especially in the search for survivors under extremely difficult conditions. Naturally, recovery will take time.

The particular vulnerability of the plantation areas is not new to me and my team. Since the start of this year the EU Delegation has been preparing, together with the Government of Sri Lanka, a rural development assistance programme for the poorest and most vulnerable areas of Uva and Central Provinces. This EU funded programme (€24-26 million) will help in the long-term development of those areas. This tragedy confirms to us the importance of this cooperation".



Decision by the ECJ concerning the listing of the LTTE

In October 2014, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) issued a ruling annulling the EU measures maintaining the LTTE on the European list of terrorist organisation.

The ruling was based on procedural concerns and the court did not pronounce itself on the substance of the LTTE activities.

The European Union is studying the ruling and will take appropriate measures.

European Commission decision to ban imports of fisheries products from Sri Lanka

The decision comes after four years of intense dialogue with Sri Lanka in the framework of the illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing regulation.

Despite progress made, Sri Lanka has not yet sufficiently addressed the shortcomings in its fisheries control system.

As a result, the Commission tabled a ban on fisheries products caught by Sri Lankan vessels being imported into the EU. In order to avoid disrupting ongoing commercial contracts, it will only come into force in mid-January 2015, which is three months after the decision is published in the EU's Official Journal.

Celebration of the 25 years of the Fall of the Berlin Wall

The German Embassy celebrated, the 9 November, at the Vihara Maha Devi Open Air Theatre, the 25 years of the Fall of the Berlin wall, by organising an event titled "Bringing Down the Wall". The event which staged live music and open mic performances was a great success!

Third EU-Asia Dialogue on migration

The Third EU-Asia Dialogue on migration was hosted in Colombo, Sri Lanka and was held the 15 and 16 October 2014. It was the first time that the dialogue was hosted in an Asian country.

The aim of the conference, titled "Strengthening Labour Migration Corridors between Asia and the European Union (EU) through Enhanced Migration Governance", was to address issues and dynamics of the migration process between the Colombo Process countries and the European Union. During the sessions, participants recognised that with a shift in demography, several EU member states are suffering from an ageing population and from growing labour shortages. On the contrary, the Asian countries have a population which continues to grow and have a growing movement of skilled migrants which can benefit the EU.



Representatives of the countries participating in the dialogue



Panellists making the introductive remarks

During the conference, progress was made in promoting collaboration between the Colombo Process countries and the EU to facilitate labour migration. Challenges and opportunities to strengthen migration management between Asia and Europe were identified. The participants agreed to promote the positive and social contributions of migrants to host countries, to enhance the recognition of skills of migrant workers, to promote ethical recruitment practices and to provide information and rights awareness services to migrant workers and their families.

EU Ambassador, H.E. David Daly:

"Migration can be synonymous with income generation, remittances and the presence of hardworking, flexible labour forces. But, at the same time, to many it also symbolises exploitation, discrimination, brain-drain and diminishing workforce. For origin countries, the income from remittances has to be offset against the departure of many of their most energetic and skilled workers who could be contributing to national development. The key to addressing these issues and unleashing the positive potential of migration is proper management of migration, in particular labour migration".



H.E. David Daly making his speech

Signature of the EUNIC Convention

On 23 October 2014, the European National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) convention was signed, at the European Union Delegation, by the Alliance Française de Kotte, Goethe Institut and the British Council. The convention was signed in the presence of H.E. David Daly, Ambassador of the European Union, H.E. Jean-Paul Monchau, Ambassador of France and H.E. Jürgen Morhard, Ambassador of Germany.



Signature of the convention by the directors of the cultural institutes

The signature of the convention marked the creation of a cooperation network between the cultural institutes. It will allow the participating institutes to develop more common cultural projects.

Since 2006, EUNIC is a recognised leader in European cultural cooperation worldwide. EUNIC network is based on open cooperation and independent and flexible administration. Its mission is to promote European values and to contribute to cultural diversity inside and outside of the EU through collaboration among European cultural institutes.



Picture of the ambassadors with the directors of the cultural institutes

EU Ambassador, H.E. David Daly:

"EUNIC is a vital partner for international cultural affairs, because of its special expertise and world-spanning network. Serving as competence pool and think tank for European institutions EUNIC complements EU initiatives and activities in the field of Culture".



European Film Festival 2014

The 7th European Film Festival (EFF) will be held in Colombo, from 27 November to 5 December 2014. European countries participating in the festival this year include Germany, France, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The EFF will showcase a selection of films that reflect the richness and cultural diversity of the European continent.

The festival will take place at the National Film Corporation Cinema in Colombo 7. The festival will then travel to Horana and Jaffna in early 2015.

For more information, updates, film synopsis, please check the EU delegation Facebook page in the coming weeks!

Visit: <https://www.facebook.com/EUDEL.SRILANKA.MALDIVES>

EU-Funded Housing Projects

Mission to visit EU-Funded projects in the North and East

Ms Libuše Soukupová, Head of Operations since September 2014, Ms Terhi Lehtinen, Head of Political Section and Mr Jaime Royo-Olid, Programme Manager-Infrastructure & Reconstruction, visited the housing programmes financed by the EU and implemented by UN-Habitat in the Northern and Eastern part of the country, on 15-19 September 2014.



UN Habitat experts in discussions with beneficiaries

The team was able to observe the impact of owner-driven reconstruction on the issues of returnees who had their houses destroyed during the war. It also offered an opportunity to the newly-arrived Head of operations to hold discussions with local officials on future EU-Sri Lanka development cooperation. EU-funded housing programmes were unanimously welcomed by the officials and the need to construct more houses, community roads and to support livelihoods such as water infrastructure was highlighted. The EU programme has constructed 20 000 houses.



Ms Soukupová in discussions with members of a women's group

The mission witnessed the negative effect of the drought on the lives of the people in the North and the East. Especially the households depending on subsistence farming were affected. The need to further improve resilience to climate change will be addressed in the future EU-funded housing programme by means of promoting local entrepreneurship and by increasing the potential of house expansion in order to store grains and to add value to the property.

Presentation of the EU-Funded housing programme

The "Support to conflict-affected people through housing" (Phase-I, 2011-2014) and "Improving Living Conditions in Returnee Areas of Sri Lanka through Housing" (Phase-II, 2013-2015) are recovery initiatives providing support to returning Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the North and East of Sri Lanka.

The EU has provided 11.5 million euros to these programmes, which are cofinanced with the Australian Government and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Jointly implemented by UN-Habitat and SDC, the programmes provide cash grants and technical support to homeowners to reconstruct and repair their conflict-damaged houses in the districts of Mullaittivu, Mannar and Kilinochchi in the North and Batticaloa in the East. Small grants are also allocated to social infrastructure such as community centres, water wells, roads, and an array of small livelihood support measures.



Inauguration group photo including the priest leader

EU support to the plantation communities

"It's a woman's world"

Set in the Indian Ocean, the island state of Sri Lanka is known around the world for its picturesque landscape, its aromatic tea and its rich culture. First grown by the British in Sri Lanka in the 1800's, tea remains one of the country's primary export earners and sources of employment. World renowned, 'Ceylon Tea' accounts for the third of the tea produced globally, while Sri Lanka remains one of the largest exporters of tea in the world. Lesser known around the world is the history of tea plantations which to many is almost synonymous with colonial rule, dating back over 150 years. The tea plantation workers and the communities of which they are a part of, still comprise of Tamils of South Indian origin, primarily brought to work in the sector through a system of 'bonded labour'. The workers in the plantations sector remain ethnically, linguistically and economically marginalised.

The EU has supported the Plantation areas in the Central Province through two projects run by CARE International. The projects collectively benefit more than 465,727 plantation Tamil workers of which a large percentage is women. Carefully designed, the project has seen excellent results including increased number of people with access to an appropriate timely and quality service from Local Authorities and increased participation of women and youth in local decision making processes. The project works closely with Local Government and private sector. The total support provided so far has been 400,000.euros.

Until the enactment of the 2003 Grant of Citizenship to Stateless Persons Act, a large section of the plantation community was deprived of basic citizenship rights. In this

context was designed the project that works on improving the lives of the tea plantation workers titled 'Including the Excluded'. The project is implemented by CARE International and funded by the EU.

One of the beneficiaries is a young woman named Annalechchamy. Easy to miss due to her unassuming attitude and shy demeanour, little is one to know that she is one of the first female community level trade union leaders, a role traditionally occupied by men. She has proven over the years to be strong and courageous, slowly removing the blocks that support parochial beliefs and ones that particularly discourage women from taking on positions of importance.



Working on a tea plantation, having seen generations follow the same footsteps; fear often engulfed Annalechchamy from even talking to the estate management, let alone negotiating for one's rights. This however has now become a thing of the past. Armed with the training provided by the project in leadership and opportunities to participate in decision-making has slowly built her confidence, helping her to overcome this fear and challenge the way of life that earlier seemed indisputable.

Most importantly she has grown to recognize that what she has to say is important and that she can influence change. Women in estates are extremely vulnerable and often face discrimination in families, communities and workplaces. Patriarchal practices are known to confine women and men to specific roles, with women taking on a less public and more subservient roles in their families and society despite their considerable contributions. With Annalechchamy taking on the role of a trade union leader, these rigidly defined and preserved roles have been challenged and her contribution is something that she is truly proud of. Although they account for the largest portion of the workforce in tea plantations, women rarely hold positions of authority that would enable them to influence changes in working conditions.

In an earlier life, Annalechchamy was no different, confined to the plucking of tea leaves, that not only required her to work longer hours and more days in a year than the men, she was also required to work in the open, often in difficult weather conditions. Anecdotal evidence has also indicated that gender based violence is particularly high in the estates, with women at the greatest risk of exposure. Given the sensitivities of these issues abuse is rarely reported



while social customs and norms often excuse such behaviour and making them more vulnerable. Limited understanding of recourse further prevented women from seeking help. Now with Annalechchamy holding the union post, she hopes that more issues pertaining to women will be discussed. Speaking of her new role and her new found freedom to express her views, she said *"I started as a volunteer, but after I received training, I am no longer scared to talk with the estate management...I speak freely!"* In the same spirit, the estate managers too have been receptive to this change, Alex Samuel, the then Group Manager of Carolina Estate, Watawala Plantations said *"By being able to talk face to face in the Community Development Forums, both sides are beneficiaries. The workers understand our requirements better and can thus appreciate the position of the management on certain issues. Productivity has improved and labour issues are rare. From the workers' perspective, they have direct access to the management and can directly explain their needs and explore ways in which management can help them."*



Alex Samuel in his office at the Watawala Plantations



World Day Against Death Penalty



Documentary screening at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies

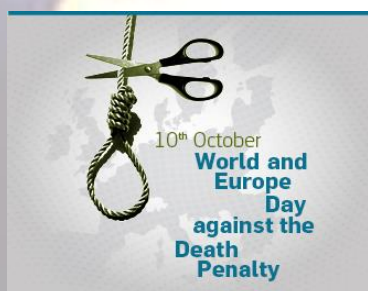


The International Centre for Ethnic Studies organized, in cooperation with the Embassy of France and the Delegation of the European Union, the screening of the movie *Honk!*, on the occasion of the World Day Against the Death Penalty. The event started with the opening remarks by Ms Terhi Lehtinen, Head of the Political section at the EU Delegation, who highlighted the important role of the European Union in the fight against death penalty.



Intervention of the French Ambassador H.E.
Jean-Paul Monchau

The movie screening was followed by a discussion and a speech given by the French ambassador, H.E. Jean-Paul Monchau. During his intervention, the ambassador explained that the international trend was leaning toward abolition of the death penalty. He recalled his country's strong commitment in favour of the universal abolition of the death penalty across the world. Finally, he outlined that, since 1976, no executions had taken place in Sri Lanka and encouraged Sri Lanka to abolish the death penalty.



EU POLICY AGAINST DEATH PENALTY

The European Union holds a strong and principled position against the death penalty; its abolition is a key objective for the Union's human rights policy. Abolition is also a pre-condition for entry into the Union.

Indeed, the EU is the leading institutional actor and largest donor to the fight against the death penalty. This commitment is outlined clearly in the EU Guidelines on the death penalty adopted in 1998.

The death penalty is cruel and inhuman, and it has not been shown to act as a deterrent to crime. The European Union regards abolition as essential for the protection of human dignity, as well as for the progressive development of human rights.

If necessary, the EU advocates a moratorium as a first step towards abolition. The adoption of a resolution on this issue by the UN General Assembly in 2007 was a major breakthrough, while growing support for subsequent resolutions adopted in 2008, 2010 and 2012 has served to illustrate the worldwide trend in this direction.

Where the capital punishment is still used, the EU calls for it to be progressively restricted and insists that it be carried out according to international minimum standards.



Meeting with the European Investment Bank

On 18 September 2014, the EU delegation organised a meeting, between the European Investment Bank (EIB) and international

NGOs working in Sri Lanka. The aim of the meeting was to help the EIB assess the impact of its financial aid in conflict-affected countries.

In Sri Lanka, the EIB is currently financing a 90 million euros loan to promote climate change mitigation and to support the development of small and medium size enterprises. By supporting the local private sector, the project is expected to contribute to job creations and poverty reduction.

The financial support provided by the EIB is channelled through the Commercial Bank of Ceylon (CBC), DFCC Bank and the Regional Development Bank.

Since 2012, three projects were approved in the Northern part of the country: the creation of an hardware manufacture and of a water gathering facility in Jaffna and the rehabilitation of an existing hotel in Vavuniya.

EU-Sri Lanka Investment Dialogue

The first EU-Sri Lanka Investor Dialogue was held, on 30 September 2014, at the Board of Investment (BOI) of Sri Lanka. The aim of the dialogue, which will take the form of a monthly forum, is to address the issues that foreign investors face in Sri Lanka.

The dialogue was attended by Sri Lankan officials from departments such as Immigration, Customs, and Trade.

Representatives from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany and France attended the dialogue.

The participants discussed issues related to obtaining business visas online, to the obligation for the foreign insurance companies to be listed in the Sri Lanka Stock Exchange and to the question of foreign ownership of land.



Deputy Minister of Investment Promotion Faiszer Musthapha chairing the EU-Sri Lanka dialogue meeting (Courtesy BOI)



The EU Ambassador H.E. David Daly with the British High Commissioner H.E. John Rankin

Signature of the lease agreement with the British High Commission

The EU Ambassador H.E. David Daly and the British High Commissioner H.E. John Rankin signed an agreement which will see the British High Commission and the European Union Delegation sharing the same building in Colombo starting from 2015. This agreement is another important symbol of the good European cooperation in Sri Lanka!



Light on Erasmus Mundus

Under the EU sponsored Erasmus Mundus programme, 216 Sri Lankan students, researchers and staff have been selected for the award of scholarships, fellowships and other study and research assignments.

Erasmus Mundus is a cooperation and mobility programme funded by the EU in the field of higher education. Its goals are to enhance the quality of education and to promote dialogue between peoples and cultures through collaboration among universities and research institutes of different countries.

The programme offers scholarships and fellowships to students, researchers and university staff to carry out study at bachelor, master, doctoral or post-doctoral levels in a pool of top quality European universities.

Partnerships have been established between several European Universities and the Sri Lankan Universities of Colombo, Peradeniya, Kelaniya and the Sri Lankan Institute of Information Technology.

Erasmus Mundus began in 2004. As from 2014 it has been incorporated in a larger framework programme named Erasmus+.

Additional avenues include funding of capacity building programmes for Sri Lankan Universities, including learning and teaching methodologies, upgrading facilities, staff development, cooperation universities/enterprise, etc.

Applications



Each year the EU funds scholarships for students worldwide to take part in Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees - integrated study programmes offered by universities from Europe and other parts of the world.

Each programme involves study in two or more universities, and offers a recognised degree on graduation

Find out more about Joint Master Degrees here: <http://europa.eu/!PY96jI> or check out the list of participating universities here: <http://europa.eu/!RN87Kc>



Interviews of the new colleagues at the EU Delegation



Libuše Soukupová

Head of Operations Czech national

Please briefly tell us about your career and personal life.

I am from the Czech Republic. The ideas of being in public service (i.e. being able to assist the people and in addition exploring the world,) appealed to me so I joined the European Commission in 2006 after passing my civil services exam. I currently live in Colombo together with my husband and two children. We moved here with great expectations and although I was prepared for my children to

face adjustment issues, I admit, it has been nothing but easy. They have enrolled into school and funnily enough have even picked up a few words of Sinhala and Tamil! I hope also to be able to learn the local languages if time permits, else I will let my children take on the translation role! We are really looking forward to discovering more of Sri Lanka in the coming years.

You were based in Asia before. How was it?

I was based in Dhaka, Bangladesh prior to coming to Sri Lanka. Like Sri Lanka, it has a lot of social, political, cultural and traditional intricacies that takes a long time to understand. However by the time I left, it felt like I was leaving my home. I miss it of course but do not want to be selfish, I feel I have left my post and space for other Europeans to discover this beautiful nation and people.

Could you tell us a little about what inspired you to come to Sri Lanka?

Living in Dhaka was exciting and inspiring but somehow Sri Lanka has always intrigued me. I have followed the trials and tribulations of the country closely and eventually I thought the environment was conducive for both my private and professional life. Thus when the opportunity came, I did not hesitate in applying and accepting the post. My colleagues and family were supportive of the decision and now here I am eager to listen, to learn and to serve to the best of my ability.

What are the main challenges you expect to face in your current post?

I would like to rephrase the question, instead of challenges; I would prefer saying it as - *leveraging existing opportunities and creating new ones*. My sole goal is to ensure our development cooperation activities in Sri Lanka are aligned with the genuine needs of the population and with the priorities as set out by the Government's various policies in particular Mahinda Chintana. I am anxious to engage both with the community and the Government so that we can share knowledge and provide support for those in need. So far, the EU and Sri Lanka enjoy very good and candid relations; this also allows me to dedicate more efforts into the promotion of the development cooperation in the field of rural development, housing, environment, promotion of gender equality, rights of children etc.

Nadia Cannata

Programme Manager Italian national

Could you start by telling us a few words about yourself? How did you start working for the operation section?

I started to work with the EU, six years ago, in Niger. Before, I worked for five years for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe; I was in Bosnia, Kosovo. I started with the development work, in Niger, with the European Union, in February 2009. In 2011, I became a contract agent and started to work on health and education. I was dealing with social sectors. Six years later I moved here! It is my second experience with the EU.



What are your first impressions of Sri Lanka?

It's very different than Niger! I was used to work in a least developed country, with a lot of security issues; we could not go out from the capital, for example. But also, the Delegation had a lot of money to be spent on development cooperation. Here it is a completely different set up; you can go everywhere, but the needs are different. This is a middle income country, with less money dedicated to development. I have to change the way I used to work!

So far, are you enjoying your time in Sri Lanka?

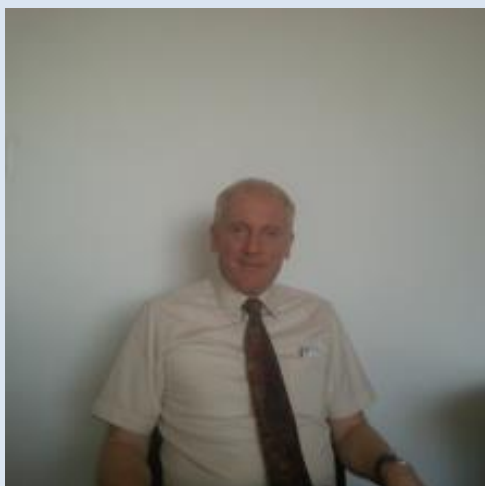
Yes, I already went outside of the capital! I went to Galle, it was very nice! I am really looking forward to visiting the country.

What inspired you to come to Sri Lanka?

I wanted a big change, to have an experience in Asia and to have an experience on a wider portfolio than before. I wanted to work in a more developed country, to see what it meant to do development in a middle income country. The fact that Sri Lanka is a country with a nationally driven development, also, interested me. I wanted to work in a country where external partners have to adapt to the economic development of a country. And Sri Lanka wasn't too big; I didn't want to work in a huge Asian capital!!

Can explain us what you are doing at the delegation?

My job is to coordinate the EU Support to District Development Programme (SDDP). In concrete, it means that I get the input from all the programs officers and try to create a more programmatic approach. I will also manage an individual program, the FAO.



Willem Verpoest

Head of Finance, Contracts and Audits Belgian national

What are your first impressions after one month in Sri Lanka?

The first impressions are positive. Colombo is a nice city, I like it a lot; there is a lot of open space; compared to my previous postings it is an improvement! Of course, it is a sea city, which also adds to the attractiveness of Colombo. The food is better than in my previous posting, there is less traffic jam. So far, so good!

Can you explain to us how you became a public servant for the EU?

From training, I am a career officer in the army. It was during the times of the Cold war, before the fall of the Berlin wall. I spent 11 years in the army and then because of the fall of the Berlin wall, most armies, in the west, started reducing their staff. It meant that there were a lot of officers and fewer soldiers. It also meant a reduction of career opportunities, less chances to become a major colonel! In the meantime, by accident, I passed the competition for the European Union. That's why I decided to leave the army in 1991!

Is it your first time in Asia?

Absolutely not! I started working in 1991 in the European Commission and I applied for a post in Japan, also by accident, which I thought I would never get! But, by surprise, I was accepted. So, I started working in Japan, in 1994, as a press attaché at the Delegation. That was my first encounter with Asia at a professional level. That was followed by postings in South Korea, Indonesia and the Philippines. Sri Lanka is my fifth posting in Asia. So you can say, I am, basically, an Asia man! Meanwhile, for four years, I spent at headquarters in Brussels, working for the Asia directory! Since 1994, I am linked to Asia, without any interruptions.

Could you tell us a few words about your job at the Delegation?

During my last three postings, I have been Head of Contracts and Finance. I have to explain a little about the "deconcentration" or devolvement. It means that the staff, managing the development cooperation, is working directly in the Delegation and no longer at the headquarters. We decide here at the delegation on payments, signature of contracts; everything is done in house! That is the key difference with most of the other donors. In addition, in the delegation, we have two different sections, the Contracts and Finance Section and the Operations Section. There is a balance between the two sections; the operations section cannot do anything without us and we cannot do anything without them. We called it the "four eyes" principle, because every file has to go through four persons.