



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **European Commission announces €38 million for new development programmes in Sri Lanka**

Brussels, 15 March 2016

Today the European Commission will co-sign two new support programmes worth €38 million in total in the field of rural development and trade with Sri Lanka, as EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, arrives for a three day visit to the country.

Ahead of the visit Commissioner Mimica said: *"With this new support, we are boosting our longstanding relationship with Sri Lanka on development cooperation. The EU has made an important contribution in providing humanitarian assistance and reconstruction support to help Sri Lanka recover from the war and the tsunami. Now our focus is on providing long-term support towards poverty reduction and local economic development. We have a new opportunity to support governance and reconciliation efforts and help address the root causes of the conflict in Sri Lanka."*

During his visit, Commissioner Mimica will hold a series of high-level meetings, including with the President of Sri Lanka, H.E. Maithripala Sirisena, the Prime Minister, Hon. Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon Mr Mangala Samaraweera, and other senior members of the Government. The Commissioner will also meet with civil society representatives, including those working on women's empowerment, child rights, disappeared people and media freedom.

### **Programmes explained**

€30 million will go to the programme 'Integrated Rural Development in the Most Vulnerable Districts of the Central and Uva Provinces'. The programme aims to improve livelihoods and household incomes, as well as access to drinking water and healthcare services for the most vulnerable of the population in Sri Lanka.

€8 million will go towards trade related assistance to help Sri Lanka reap the benefits of further integration into the global and regional trading system. It will help the country develop relevant policies, and improve their market access, competitiveness and compliance with international standards.

### **Background**

For the period 2014-2020, the EU has allocated €210 million to Sri Lanka for rural development (the amount is almost double the previous amount of €110 million allocated in the period 2007-2013). While the previous development programme supported tsunami and conflict-affected areas, the new programme aims to support the country in its transition to becoming an upper middle income country.

The EU and Sri Lanka have had a longstanding cooperative partnership spanning 41 years since the first Sri Lanka-EU Commercial Cooperation Agreement signed in 1975. Over the last 10 years, the EU has allocated €760 million in development and humanitarian assistance to the country.

Support has been directed towards poverty reduction and provision of basic infrastructure and services for the most vulnerable of the country's population and support for local economic development and the strengthening of local governance. The EU has also supported post-tsunami reconstruction, humanitarian relief and conflict affected communities. In addition, the EU continues to provide other sources of funding in the form of electoral assistance, to support civil society organisations, local authorities, environment, human rights, and to support academic exchanges.

**For more information**

*Website on EU development cooperation with Sri Lanka:*

[https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/countries/sri-lanka\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/countries/sri-lanka_en)

*Website of Commissioner Neven Mimica:* [http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/mimica\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/mimica_en)