

EUROPE DAY MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR BERNARD SAVAGE

Delegation of the European Union to Sri Lanka and the Maldives



The European Union will celebrate the 62nd anniversary since the "Declaration of Europe" on 9th May 2012. Back in 1950, Europe was in ruins from the Second World War and looking to ways to prevent such an incident from ever happening again the then French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman put forward his idea for an integrated Europe and called for deeper cooperation between the nations, bringing them together to manage their common resources.

The European Union which began with just six European nations back in 1951, today boasts an amalgamation of twenty seven European nations with over 500 million citizens and truly embodies the motto "united in diversity". The EU continues to expand further and with an official ratification this year, Croatia would join the EU as the 28th member in June 2013.

The European Union is the largest donor of Development Aid to the world, having provided over Euro 53 billion, which accounts to more than half of the official global aid. The EU is also the world's largest trader, and its single currency, The Euro, shared by 17 of the 27 Member States, as of 2012, has surpassed the US dollar as the highest combined value of currency in circulation in the world.

This year marks a significant milestone in the EU's humanitarian aid assistance. The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department or ECHO celebrates 20 years of providing vital humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable victims in crisis situations worldwide. ECHO provides more than Euro 700 million in grant funding for humanitarian assistance to over 18 million people in more than 100 countries around the world each year. ECHO is the first responder to the countless victims in times of humanitarian crisis, be it natural disasters or armed conflict.

The European Union has had long standing relations with Sri Lanka dating back over 37 years and has supported the country through many a difficult time. The EU now looks to continuing and further strengthening those ties with supporting Sri Lanka's move to achieving its development goals. Through its two major ongoing programmes the EU has already managed to deliver significant results. The EU ACAP (Assistance to Conflict Affected People) and the EU SEM (Support to Socio Economic Measures) programmes are together worth more than LKR 10 billion (Euro 69 million) and will support almost half a million former Internally Displaced People (IDPs) to restart their lives, through livelihood assistance and reconstruction of community infrastructures.

On behalf of the EU, I would like to pledge our continued support to the Government and people of Sri Lanka.

Bernard Savage
Ambassador/ Head of Delegation