



European Union

Colombo, 2 April 2015

PRESS RELEASE

The 19th meeting of the European Union (EU)-Sri Lanka Joint Commission took place on 2 April 2015 in Colombo. The meeting was opened by the Honourable Foreign Minister, Mr Mangala Samaraweera. It was co-chaired by Mrs Chitranganee Wagiswara, Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, and by Mr Ugo Astuto, Acting Managing Director for Asia and the Pacific of the European External Action Service. The meeting was held in a friendly and constructive atmosphere.

The Joint Commission, which oversees the EU-Sri Lanka Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development (in place since 20 years), deals with a broad range of bilateral and multilateral issues of mutual interest. Its tasks are to ensure the proper functioning and implementation of the Agreement and it is empowered to set priorities and make recommendations.

The EU informed Sri Lanka about the decision of the Council of the European Union of 26 March, which was adopted by unanimous vote of the 28 EU Member States, to re-list the LTTE as a terrorist organisation in the EU. This decision followed the ruling of the General Court of the EU of 16 October 2014 that had annulled the previous listing on purely procedural grounds.

The recent ban on fish exports from Sri Lanka to the EU under the EU regulation on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing was discussed. The EU took note of recently submitted road map and called on Sri Lanka to address the remaining shortcomings. Sri Lanka promised to submit its next progress report to the EU in May.

The Joint Commission received a report from the EU-Sri Lanka Working Group meeting on Trade and Economic Cooperation of 24 March. The Working Group started the process that may lead to the re-admission of Sri Lanka to the status of GSP+. A pre-condition for GSP+ benefits is effective implementation of 27 UN conventions relating to human rights, labour rights, environment and good governance.

In this respect at the Joint Commission it was agreed in principle to establish a new Working Group on Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights to

allow for a dialogue on these issues. The two parties will now work together to agree Terms of Reference of this Working Group.

The EU Member States supported deferral of discussion on Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in order to give more time and space requested by the Government of Sri Lanka to deliver on its commitments to improve the human rights record and set up a credible domestic mechanism for accountability and reconciliation. The EU will follow these developments closely.

The EU is one of the major development donors in Sri Lanka. In the last ten years approximately 777.4 million euros (LKR 114 billion) of humanitarian and development assistance has been made available. The bulk of the aid has been people-oriented following the tsunami and providing housing and livelihoods to the internally displaced people in the areas worst affected by the civil war. The new development programme for 2014-2020 focuses on integrated rural development. The EU will also provide Trade Related Assistance to help boosting Sri Lanka's export capacity.

Contact for this press release: European Union - Press and Information Section (+94-11- 267 4413)