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HISTORICAL ARCHIVE

Published under: Bondevik's 2nd Government
Publisher Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Declaration in support of the peace process in Sri Lanka

Press release | Published: 2002-11-25

Declaration in Support of the Peace Process in Sri Lanka.

We, government representatives from the Asia-Pacific region, North America and Europe, meeting in Oslo on 25 November 2002, express strong support for the historic peace process now underway in Sri Lanka. At this critical phase of the peace process, we commit ourselves to providing immediate financial assistance. A donor conference, proposed to be held in Tokyo in 2003, will have a greater focus on longer-term financial assistance and continue our efforts at donor co-ordination.

While the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have already achieved important results, which have required great political courage, we urge both parties to exert further expeditious and systematic efforts, without recourse to violence, to resolve the hardcore political issues in order to achieve a lasting political settlement of decades of protracted conflict. We recognise the critical role played by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission in maintaining the cease fire agreement of 23 February 2002.

We urgently appeal to all the people of Sri Lanka, their political leaders and institutions to support a national consensus on the need for a final political settlement. To this end, we encourage the elected representatives of the people of Sri Lanka, on whom the ultimate responsibility for the country's destiny falls, to address their challenging task with courage and vision. And we urge the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to make every effort to promote an inclusive peace process.

For the peace process to succeed, popular support for peace must be sustained. Given the complexity of the issues to be resolved, the negotiations will face significant challenges along the way. International financial assistance is important for people to begin to see tangible benefits of peace in their daily lives. We recognise that it is important that people across the whole of Sri Lanka enjoy benefits of peace. Building a national consensus for the difficult steps ahead in the peace process will require particular efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable, such as the poor, the unemployed, especially in the rural areas, and women and children.

We commend both parties for their strong commitment to a lasting peace. A lasting peace must be built upon renunciation of violence and respect for the principles of human rights, democracy, rule of law, and recognition of the rights of minorities, and must address the needs of all communities all over Sri Lanka, in order to combat poverty and foster ethnic harmony. Resolution of the ethnic conflict will remove the main barrier to sustained economic and social progress in Sri Lanka. It is in this perspective that we pledge to provide assistance to meet the immediate needs and priorities identified at this meeting, so that assistance may be given island-wide, when and where it is most needed, thereby directly promoting the peace process.

While all areas of Sri Lanka have been seriously affected by the war, the North and East have suffered the most extensive destruction. We commend the parties for establishing a joint Sub-Committee on Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and East and setting up a Fund with the aim of enhancing and prioritising donor activities in these war ravaged areas, which continue to experience severe social and economic hardships. The Sub-Committee has issued an urgent appeal to the international community for immediate assistance to begin to resettle and rehabilitate internally displaced persons, address the needs of women and children and help the population to resume their economic activities. We will take into account the co-ordinating role ascribed by the parties to the Sub-Committee, in order to support this important mechanism of ownership by the parties in its work for effective reconstruction and confidence building, while stressing the need for flexibility in accepting various forms of assistance from the international community.

The Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have already taken resolute steps towards peace. They face many challenges in seeking a lasting political settlement, acceptable to all communities living in the island. We therefore pledge to support their efforts with financial assistance to the people of Sri Lanka and continued encouragement to the parties in their search for a lasting peace through a negotiated final resolution of the conflict.

Oslo, 25 November 2002



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