



Royal Norwegian Embassy Berlin

PRESS RELEASE
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The Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) held the fifth and shortened session of peace talks at the Norwegian Embassy in Berlin on 7 – 8 February 2003. The discussions focused on complex issues in a spirit of cooperation and conciliation

The parties expressed their concern about the situation at sea and their strong commitment to ensure that an incident such as the one which resulted in the tragic loss of three lives on a Sea Tiger vessel near the Delft islands on 7 February 2003 does not recur. Recognising the gravity of the consequences of incidents of this kind, the parties agreed that a meeting will be held soon between the GOSL, LTTE and Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), to work out effective safeguards.

The parties reviewed progress reports on the work of the Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and East (SIHRN). Both parties underscored the urgent need to commence humanitarian and rehabilitation activities in the north and east. The parties reported that the agreement on World Bank custodianship of the Northeast Reconstruction Fund (NERF) is close to finalisation and will be signed within the next week. The parties once again appealed to the international community to make funds rapidly available for immediate humanitarian and rehabilitation needs in the north and east

The parties reported that the implementation of the Action Plan for Accelerated Resettlement in the Jaffna district (ARP) is ahead of schedule. The seven Assessment Teams, comprising representatives from the GOSL, LTTE and UNHCR, have completed preliminary needs assessments and are identifying the activities required to facilitate resettlement. The parties also reported that the concept papers approved at the previous meeting of SIHRN on 15 – 16 January have been developed into proposals for concrete projects that can be approved and begun immediately. As requested by SIHRN at the last meeting the report on the return of displaced Muslims in the Northern Province has been submitted for their consideration.

The parties agreed to establish three committees, one in each district of the Eastern Province, to address land issues and other areas of mutual concern. The committees will consist of six representatives of the Muslim population and six representatives of the LTTE. The work of the committees will start immediately. Similar committees will be appointed to address such issues relating to other communities as and when required.

Following a thorough discussion of human rights, the parties agreed to ask their international Human Rights Adviser, Mr. Ian Martin, to draw up a roadmap for human rights issues relating to the peace process. The draft roadmap will be prepared for discussion in the sixth session of talks in Japan in March and will include

- substantive human rights activities and commitments to be implemented throughout the negotiation process
- effective mechanisms for the monitoring of human rights
- training of LTTE cadres and GOSL officials in human rights and humanitarian law
- training of police and prison officers.

Both parties agreed that children living in the north east of Sri Lanka have been the most seriously affected by the war between the GOSL and the LTTE. UNICEF estimates that there are 900 000 children in the north east, all of whom have been seriously affected. Many of these children are faced with malnutrition poor health care and education facilities, continued displacement, loss of parents and families, and land mines. The LTTE has agreed to work with UNICEF to draw up an action plan for children affected by the armed conflict in the north east. Such an action plan will include an intensified effort by the LTTE to stop underage recruitment. The LTTE restated its pledge to bring the practice to an end. The action plan will include a credible review mechanism. The LTTE has agreed to a complete cessation of recruitment of, and recruitment campaigns aimed at persons under 18 years of age. In this context, the LTTE has handed over 350 children who had joined the organisation, for reunification with their parents or guardians. The plan will also include rehabilitation assistance, including provisions for schooling, vocational training, employment facilitation, and health and psychosocial care, with the active support of the government

The parties intend to commence a discussion on the fiscal aspects of a federal structure at the next session. It was noted that the LTTE has already taken action to set up a Political Affairs Committee with a view to addressing in depth issues pertaining to alternative structures of powersharing.

The parties confirmed that the sixth session of peace talks will take place on 18 – 21 March 2003 in Japan and that the seventh session will be held on 29 April – 2 May 2003.