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TO BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG AND THE EUROPEAN UNION  
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**Intervention by H.E. Ravinatha Aryasinha, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Belgium, Luxembourg and the EU at the screening of 'Sri Lanka's Killing Fields' at the European Parliament – 12 October 2011**

The Government of Sri Lanka strongly protests the use of the premises of the European Parliament, through a private members initiative, for the screening of this film today.

Upon receiving information of this insidious agenda, on 03rd October 2011, I drew this matter to the attention of Dr. Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament. On 07th October 2011, in a reply on behalf of President Buzek, Ms. Inga Rosinska, Head of Cabinet of the President assured me, that “similar to many other events organized on the Parliament’s premises, this film screening is not organized by an official political organ of the European Parliament, therefore it does not represent or reflect an official position of the institution or any of its bodies”.

My presence here today, is to underline the partiality of these proceedings and to counter the gross distortion of fact ‘Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields’ seeks to convey.

Let me in brief spell out why we object to the screening of this film.

First, this film’s authenticity is in question, as it includes footage of dubious origin, content that is distorted and without proper sourcing, and makes unsubstantiated allegations against the Government of Sri Lanka. Aired and shown without any guarantee, this film has the potential to incite hatred amongst different communities in Sri Lanka, including future generations, and adversely affects the ongoing reconciliation process. The Government of Sri Lanka is in possession of substantial evidence to prove that most of the footage in the film has been stage managed and doctored, and has made arrangements to make this information available to the UN Secretary General and the authorities concerned through appropriate channels.

- Its star witness and chief protagonist Ms. Damilvany Gnanakumar portrayed as a UK citizen who went to Sri Lanka and got held up due to the fighting and who served as a medical volunteer, is now proved to be a member of the LTTE ‘Soodiya’ Regiment and a prominent member of the Tamil Youth Organization (TYO), who unknown to her family went back to Sri Lanka to help ‘Castro’, the LTTE’s point person responsible for coordinating its international network.

- Another prominent contributor to this doctored narrative Mr. Gordon Weiss, the former spokesperson of the UN in Sri Lanka, in this film claims that between 10,000 to 40,000 civilians were killed, while his original estimate when in Colombo was 7,000, which was refuted the very next day by the U.N. itself as unreliable.
- Another prominent personality referred to in the film –Ms. Isipriya who is portrayed as a ‘TV announcer’, is a trained LTTE cadre holding the rank of Lt. Colonel, and was responsible for the training of LTTE female suicide cadres.
- The doctored footage depicting shooting at point blank range, originally claimed to have been recorded from a mobile phone, has now been proved to have been done from a hand held camera which has a date mark 15 July 2009 at UTC 13:17:23, almost three months after the ending of the terrorist conflict on 19 May 2009. This, together with other anomalies in the synchronization of the audio and video of this film, lends credence that the whole episode was stage managed.
- The film also fails to name their sources and uses shadows and ghosts in their interviews, thereby further questioning its authenticity and denying any objective viewer the possibility of verifying the information presented.
- Translations at critical points of the film are also consciously distorted to mislead the viewer, such as the point at which civilians are seen being huddled into a trench, seemingly to protect themselves against shelling. However, the comments by the people correctly translated, merely denote their asking not to be filmed, again re-emphasising the stage managed nature of this film.
- Even something as simple as a civilian protest, which is described as a “spontaneous” move in the film, has now been proved to have been stage managed by the LTTE.
- The charge that hospitals were attacked by the Sri Lankan forces during the fighting, has been disputed by medical doctors who served in those very hospitals at the time.
- The accusation that GOSL denied food and medicine, and deliberately targeted civilians in the ‘no-fire’ zone is completely without basis, and runs contrary to the massive humanitarian operation known to have been carried out by the Sri Lankan security forces, who in the final stages of the conflict, at great risk to themselves, brought back to safety nearly 300,000 civilians including women and children, held as human shields by the LTTE for over a year.

We have also made available to you at this venue copies of ‘Lies Agreed Upon’, a video documentary, and the report titled ‘Humanitarian Operation: Factual Analysis’, produced by the Government of Sri Lanka. The first provides a point by point response to the allegations made in the film ‘Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields’, while the latter details the various stages of the humanitarian operation. I trust that after perusing this material, you will be better informed about the facts in this case, which would help you separate the truth from the propaganda.

Second, this film seeks to downplay the immense suffering caused to the people of Sri Lanka for nearly 30 years, predominantly the Tamil community, by the LTTE, an entity proscribed as a terrorist organization by the EU.

The LTTE is responsible for the killing of a generation of Sri Lanka's political leadership of all ethnic groups. It included a sitting President, a Foreign Minister and a Leader of the Opposition, as well as a former Prime Minister of India. Civilian massacres, suicide bombings and acts of ethnic cleansing were integral parts of the LTTE's pursuit to create a fascist, mono-ethnic Tamil Eelam. Even Mr. Anders Behring Breivik, the person who was responsible for the recent terror attacks in Norway, has claimed in his writings, that he closely followed the terror tactics of the LTTE and endorsed them.

It is ironic, that since the LTTE leadership was militarily defeated on 19 May 2009, while in Sri Lanka there has been no cause for any counter terrorism action, that in counter-terror operations across Europe, some 32 LTTE activists have been arrested, while an additional 21 have been convicted over the last two years. In the trial of 5 LTTE members presently taking place in the Netherlands, the Public Prosecutor's Office is calling for 16 year jail sentences, which indicates the seriousness of their criminal activities on European soil.

Third, the motive of the producers and promoters of this film, is to discredit and vilify Sri Lanka and to detract attention from the considerable positive developments that have taken place on the ground since the ending of terrorism a little over 2 years ago. It shows patent bias in ignoring Sri Lanka's acclaimed success story of managing the post-conflict recovery, which compares well with post-conflict situations elsewhere, including in Europe. These developments have been acknowledged by numerous visiting foreign delegations to the country, including the South Asia Delegation, the formal body of the European Parliament which follows developments in Sri Lanka, and whose members visited Sri Lanka earlier this year and submitted their report in June 2011.

- The socio-economic, nutritional, and mortality indicators in the IDP centres housing the displaced were deemed commendable by international standards, to that of a normal population of this magnitude. Over 65 international and local NGOs operated freely in these centres. As per the Situation Report of the Ministry of Resettlement, as of 19 September 2011 there are only 7439 IDPs remaining and the main IDP site at Manik Farm is shortly to be closed.

- Of the 11,955 ex-combatants who surrendered or were arrested at the end of the terrorist conflict, a total of 9962 have been rehabilitated and re-intergraded into society. This includes all 594 ex-child combatants, who have been handed over to their parents. Of the remainder, some are to be prosecuted, while the rest would be released in staggered intervals after they complete their rehabilitation programme, depending on their degree of terrorist involvement.

- Within a period of 21 months GOSL has also de-mined approximately 92% (1.2 million sq. mt. out of a total 1.3 million sq. mt), of the contaminated areas of LTTE mine fields, thankfully recording not a single death among the returning civilians due to landmines. Arms caches of the LTTE continue to be discovered during the on-going de-mining process.

- The northern province where the LTTE had prevented any development work for almost 30 years, is now seeing massive government investment into infrastructure development, improvement of education, cultural and livelihood development activities. In 2010, the economic growth recorded in the northern province was 22%, and the revival of the economy has enhanced incomes and improved livelihoods.

- Since May 2009, the people of these areas have also actively participated in the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government electoral processes, exercising their franchise and joining the democratic process after a lapse of many decades.

- Within months after the ending of terrorism, in a spirit of reconciliation the Government of Sri Lanka commenced a political dialogue with the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), the largest Tamil political party represented in Parliament, and subsequently appointed a Parliamentary Select Committee for a national-level discourse focusing on constitutional reforms. It is tasked with formulating a series of measures that the vast majority of the Sri Lankan people will find acceptable.

- One of the most important actions taken post-conflict, was the appointment by President Mahinda Rajapaksa of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) - the domestic process premised on the concept of restorative justice, presently underway to ensure accountability, justice and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. The LLRC which began sittings on 11 August 2010, has in response to a public notice received 266 written representations and had 204 persons (including those invited by the Commission) providing oral submissions during sittings held in Colombo. Additionally, sessions have also been held in the districts of Jaffna, Mullativu, Killinochchi, Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Ampara, Puttalam, as well as at the Boosa detention centre in the Galle district where the ex-combatants are being held in detention. In these field visits the LLRC has heard oral submissions from 735 persons, and received written representations from around 5000 persons. In September 2010, it submitted interim recommendations which covered issues relating to detention of ex-combatants, land issues, law and order, administration and language issues, socio-economic and livelihood issues. The Government of Sri Lanka has made clear that once the final report of the LLRC is released by 15 November 2011, it will take appropriate action on its recommendations.

Fourth, the timing of this event is particularly sinister, coming on the eve of the presentation of the LLRC Report due next month. It would appear that the three organizations sponsoring this event, and the forces behind them, are intent on pre-judging and discrediting the LLRC report even before it is released. It is not a surprise that AI, HRW and ICG should do so, having refused an earlier invitation from the LLRC to testify before the Commission. The same applies to Mr. Callum Macrae, the Director/Producer of 'Sri Lanka's Killing Fields', who together with Channel 4 which aired the film, turned down repeated calls by the LLRC, to provide the original video and any other evidence available, so that the LLRC could investigate. I believe the lesson to be drawn from this is that it is probably easier to cast aspersions from afar and keep the pot boiling, than having such allegations put to test.

The indecent hurry to host events like this and to call for international inquiries, is probably due to their fear that once the LLRC report comes out, they will be short of one further excuse, with which to continue their obsessive attack on the Government of Sri Lanka - for

eliminating the LTTE and having denied them the main weapon used by external sources inimical to Sri Lanka's interest, to undermine the country and prevent it reaching its full potential.

Fifth, this event is also a reminder that the Director/Producer of this film and INGOs such as AI, HRW and ICG, are driven by the compulsions of certain interested elements of the Sri Lankan Tamil expatriates who have become vote banks and pressure groups in several Western countries. We must seriously ponder the question, as to who speaks for the Sri Lankan Tamil community?. Whether it is the self seeking vociferous minority living in greener pastures overseas who continue to advocate mono-ethnic separatism in Sri Lanka, while espousing the ideology of the LTTE, using its resources and being manipulated by its surviving military leaders; or whether it is the Tamil community living in the North and the East and other parts of Sri Lanka who were subjected to decades of violence, who together with the enlightened sections of the Sri Lankan Tamil expatriates are keen to re-build their own future and that of their children in a new and peaceful Sri Lanka, in a spirit of reconciliation.

### Conclusion

It is in the above context, that those MEPs responsible for facilitating this private event, and in allowing the European Parliament to be used as a platform by LTTE apologists, should re-think their actions. What you are probably unaware of, is that your support to initiatives such as these only serve to strengthen the rump elements of the LTTE seeking refuge in the West, who use the propaganda value derived from the screening of this film, as a tool to intensify their fundraising and recruitment activities, thereby undermining the process of reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

It is important that European States and institutions, that stand for the ideals of freedom and democracy should not be fooled by the false pretences of those elements behind such exercises, and do not provide any political or symbolic support to the subterranean agenda of LTTE apologists.

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