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## Diplomats of Muslim countries condemn LTTE terror attack in Akuressa

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The High Commissioners for Bangladesh and Malaysia, as well as the Indonesian Ambassador on behalf of their respective Governments, have strongly denounced the suicide bomb attack carried out by the LTTE yesterday (10 March 2009) at the Godapitiya Jumma Mosque in Akuressa, targeting a peaceful procession led by Government Ministers to celebrate the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday, held under State patronage.

Participating in a discussion chaired by Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama at the Ministry today, these diplomats expressed their solidarity with the people of Sri Lanka in the wake of this terror attack and wished the Government success in its current endeavour to defeat terrorism. The Minister of Petroleum and Petroleum Resources Development, A.H.M. Fowzie and the Minister of Disaster Relief Services, S. Ameer Ali, who had a narrow escape in the bomb blast, as well as the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hussein A. Bhaila and Foreign Secretary, Dr. Palitha Kohona were associated with Minister Bogollagama at the discussion held to brief Heads of Mission of 14 predominantly Muslim countries based in Colombo on this ruthless act of terrorism perpetrated by the LTTE. Ministers Fowzie and Ameer Ali recounted their own harrowing close encounter with death in the suicide bombing yesterday, in which at least 13 innocent civilians were killed and many wounded, including the Minister of Posts & Telecommunications, Mahinda Wijesekera who sustained serious injuries. The Foreign Minister took the opportunity to brief the diplomats of the historical antecedents of the targeting of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka by the LTTE for their strong opposition to the separatist agenda espoused by the LTTE. In particular, he highlighted the massacres of Muslim worshippers at the Meera Jumma and Husseiniya Mosques in Kattankudy in August 1990, as well as the systematic slaughter of Muslim civilians in remote Muslim hamlets in the Eastern Province. He also drew the attention of the assembled diplomats to the wholesale ethnic cleansing of the entire Muslim community of the Northern Province in October 1990, which the LTTE carried out with cold blooded and clinical precision. Minister Bogollagama called upon the international community to extend their support and understanding to the Government of Sri Lanka at this critical juncture, when the security forces are engaged in the final phase of their humanitarian operation to eradicate the menace of terrorism from every square inch of the country.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Colombo 11 March 2009 PS : Please find below full text of the Statement by Hon. Foreign Minister at the briefing: Statement by Hon. Rohitha Bogollagama, Minister of Foreign Affairs at a meeting with Heads of Mission of Islamic countries based in Colombo on 11 March 2009 Hon. Minister Fowzie, Hon. Minister Ameer Ali, Deputy Minister, Hussein Bhaila, Excellencies, Firstly, let me express my sincere thanks to everyone for being present here this afternoon at the Foreign Ministry at short notice. As you are all aware, a day that is sacred to Muslims all over the world was marred by a cowardly suicide bomb attack yesterday near the Godapitiya Jumma Mosque in Akuressa in Matara district, targeting the National Milad-un-Nabi festival held under State patronage to celebrate the Birthday of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Government of Sri Lanka strongly condemns this ruthless act of terrorism. At least 13 innocent civilians lost their lives and left scores of others wounded, including the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, Hon. Mahinda Wijesekera, who was severely injured in this barbaric terrorist outrage. I am also grateful to Hon. A.H.M. Fowzie, Minister of Petroleum & Petroleum Resources Development and Hon. Ameer Ali, Minister of Disaster Relief Services, who themselves had a narrow escape in the bomb blast, for their kind presence today to be associated with me at this discussion. I wish to take this opportunity to convey our heartfelt condolences to the members of the bereaved families and also wish speedy recovery for all those who had been injured. This murderous attack directed at a religious festival of the Muslim community of Sri Lanka bears all the hallmarks of the LTTE, which has once again demonstrated its callous disregard and utter contempt for religion. The LTTE which pioneered the suicide belt bomb and has given the lead to other terrorist outfits around the world in many innovative methods of launching terror attacks, stands condemned in the eyes of the world for perpetrating this latest atrocity, designed to incite religious and communal hatred in Sri Lanka, and undermine the prevailing harmony between the various ethnic, religious and linguistic groups who have been living in peaceful co-existence for centuries throughout the island. Despite the countless atrocities committed by the LTTE over the years, particularly targeting the Buddhists and Muslims, whether directed at sacred places of worship, religious dignitaries or civilians belonging to these communities, it is to the credit of the overwhelming majority of the people of Sri Lanka, that there has been no backlash against innocent fellow Tamil citizens, which gives a strong message loud and clear to the whole world of the goodwill and brotherhood that exists within the rich and diverse mosaic that is Sri Lanka. If I may briefly recall that the LTTE launched a bloody attack on the Sri Maha Bodhi, in the Sacred City of Anuradhapura on 14th May 1985 killing in cold blood over 120 Buddhist monks, and devotees, including women and children even as they were worshipping. Two years later on 02nd June 1987 they butchered 33 Buddhist monks in the village of Arantalawa in the Ampara district. It is the LTTE which also bombed the Sri Dalada Maligawa at Kandy, the repository of the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha and venerated by Buddhist all over the world, on 25th January 1998, which earned the LTTE universal revulsion and outrage. The Muslim community in this country has co-existed peacefully with both the Sinhalese and the Tamil communities and lived amidst them for centuries. The Muslims, particularly in the North and the East of Sri Lanka have been especially targeted by the LTTE for their resolute opposition to the separatist agenda espoused by the LTTE. For their stubborn defiance, the Muslims have paid a heavy price. The LTTE commenced its murderous campaign against the Muslims in the East by launching coordinated attacks on the Meera Jumma and Husseiniya Mosques in Kattankudy on 03rd August 1990, in which 147 worshippers were gunned down, as they knelt in prayer. The fear psychosis that was instilled in the Muslim community by the LTTE was reinforced by further massacres carried out on isolated Muslim villages in the Eastern Province. The Palliyagodella village was targetted in October 1991 in which 109 Muslim men, women and children were brutally hacked to death in their sleep by women and child cadres of the LTTE. This also marked the beginning of the induction of women and children by the LTTE to carry out cold blooded massacres of civilians in other parts of the

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country as well. The ethnic cleansing of the entire Muslim community in the Northern Province, which the LTTE carried out in October 1990 with cold blooded and clinical precision, stands out in the annals of world history as a chapter written in shame of the wholesale uprooting and expulsion of an entire ethnic community which has lived for generations in that part of the country. Even today, 18 years after this shameful incident, these Muslims numbering over 100,000 are still languishing in IDP camps in the Puttalam district and other parts of Sri Lanka, as refugees in their own country. I believe, it is also opportune for me to remind the world that even as the LTTE which has now been pushed to the point of extinction as a terrorist outfit in this country, pleading in vain for intervention by the international community under the false pretext of preventing a genocide of Tamils, that it is the LTTE which in fact is solely responsible for the genocidal attacks on the Muslim community in the North and the East of Sri Lanka. Notwithstanding the terror attack by the LTTE on the National Milad-un-Nabi festival yesterday or any other atrocities that the LTTE in its final moments of abject desperation may be contemplating to unleash, the Government of Sri Lanka remains resolutely committed to eradicating the menace of terrorism from every square inch of our country. We seek the support and understanding of the international community at this critical juncture, when our security forces are engaged in the final phase of this humanitarian mission to free the Tamil people from the clutches of the LTTE. This will herald the dawn of a new era of lasting peace and stability in Sri Lanka, devoid of fear and insecurity. Thank you.