Sri Lanka now looks to future with renewed hope and enthusiasm-President at NAM

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For 27 long years my people were gripped by mortal fear. A great sigh of relief has now swept across the entire nation being finally released from the grip of the fear of terrorism. The Sri Lankan Nation now looks to the future with renewed hope and enthusiasm. We have faith that all our friends who stood by us in our hour of need will continue to stand by us and walk with us in our journey to develop Sri Lanka for the benefit of all our people, said President Mahinda Rajapaksa in his statement at the 15th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement being held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt today July 15. "I am proud to announce that my country has succeeded in eliminating one of the most brutal terrorist groups in the world. This group was not a liberation movement but an anti-national separatist cult that glorified violence. Sadly they were able to propagate their cult of violence and hatred in some countries which, for understandable but unjustifiable political reasons, seemed less than forthright in their opposition to terrorism that did not seem to threaten them", the President added. President with NAM Leaders"Our Government is aware that defeating a terrorist group does not solve the underlying grievances of our people. We are therefore now dealing with these issues. First and foremost, we are engaged in attending to the needs of the 287,000 civilians who were held hostage by the terrorists and liberated by our Security Forces. Our goal is to quickly return the displaced to their homes and to restore their livelihoods. The needs of the displaced are substantial, and we welcome and thank all those in the international community who have offered us assistance. I take this opportunity to thank the United Nations, and the Secretary General in particular who visited Sri Lanka and extended UN assistance. I also thank those countries that have given generously to benefit our people who suffered for so long with no one to speak for them when under terrorist domination", the President added. Referring to the world financial and economic crises, President Rajapaksa said: "The world is today confronted by a crisis that is essentially the creation of the financial markets of certain developed countries. As a consequence of his financial crisis, our development agenda is challenged; our exports are crippled; our industries are suffering from a lack of confidence; and we face an externally induced liquidity shortfall. It is unfortunate that many countries of the developing world, which largely with their own resources climbed up the ladder of development, are adversely affected and even penalized in this manner due to the global financial crisis which was not of their own making". Here is the text of President's statement. It is with great pleasure that I address you today in this historic land of a great civilization and a fountain-head of the Non-Aligned Movement. Let me thank the Egyptian authorities for the wonderful hospitality extended to me and my delegation. I also wish to thank President Raul Castro for his efficient and inspiring stewardship of our Movement, through challenging times. Mr. Chairman, Representing a founding nation of our Movement, I am honored to speak today on several current issues of relevance to us. I note some of the useful suggestions made by H. E. Muammar Ghaddafi. I am proud to announce that my country has succeeded in eliminating one of the most brutal terrorist groups in the world. This group was not a liberation movement but an anti-national separatist cult that glorified violence. Sadly they were able to propagate their cult of violence and hatred in some countries which, for understandable but unjustifiable political reasons, seemed less than forthright in their opposition to terrorism that did not seem to threaten them. Mr. Chairman, Terrorism threatens and diminishes all of us, so we are grateful to our friends, especially in the Non-Aligned Movement, who helped and stood by us consistently through our most difficult times. Sri Lanka has consistently condemned terrorism in all its forms and therefore we are happy at our success in defeating terrorism on our soil, and hope that the world, like our principled friends here will rejoice with us and not begrudge a victory they should hope will be repeated elsewhere. For 27 long years my people were gripped by mortal fear. A great sigh of relief has now swept across the entire nation being finally released from the grip of the fear of terrorism. The Sri Lankan Nation now looks to the future with renewed hope and enthusiasm. We have faith that all our friends who stood by us in our hour of need will continue to stand by us and walk with us in our journey to develop Sri Lanka for the benefit of all our people. Our Government is aware that defeating a terrorist group does not solve the underlying grievances of our people. We are therefore now dealing with these issues. First and foremost, we are engaged in attending to the needs of the 287,000 civilians who were held hostage by the terrorists and liberated by our Security Forces. Our goal is to quickly return the displaced to their homes and to restore their livelihoods. The needs of the displaced are substantial, and we welcome and thank all those in the international community who have offered us assistance. I take this opportunity to thank the United Nations, and the Secretary General in particular who visited Sri Lanka and extended UN assistance. I also thank those countries that have given generously to benefit our people who suffered for so long with no one to speak for them when under terrorist domination. Our society is a caring society, and people from all parts of the country have come forward to assist those who were displaced. We are confident that our Government, together with our civil society, and with the support of our international friends, will ensure that all displaced persons resume their normal lives very soon, and partake fully in the social, political and economic development on which my government has embarked. We have noted the comments made by our colleagues with regard to the use of sanctions against individual countries. Sanctions, whatever the cause, only punish the people of that country. Punishing a people must never be endorsed by the international community. Mr. Chairman, The world is today confronted by a crisis that is essentially the creation of the financial markets of certain developed countries. As a consequence of his financial crisis, our development agenda is challenged; our exports are crippled; our industries are suffering from a lack of confidence; and we face an externally induced liquidity shortfall. It is unfortunate that many countries of the developing world, which largely with their own resources climbed up the ladder of development, are adversely affected and even penalized in this manner due to the global financial crisis which was not of their own making. The rescue packages currently being implemented seem to focus essentially on helping the economies of developed countries. This is short-sighted, as the world today is inter-linked and inter-dependent as never before. There cannot be a satisfactory outcome to this crisis unless these packages are designed to help developing country economies as well. Among other measures, we urge the consideration of

temporary deferment of debt repayment as an essential short-term initiative to overcome current difficulties of the affected developing countries. Mr. Chairman, We believe in self-help and solidarity which are hallmarks of our movement as well. In this spirit, I would like to propose that we combine our substantial collective resources to establish an Emergency Financing Facility which could be accessed in situations of the current sort. For far too long, global financial institutions have been dominated by traditional economies. Today the world economy is different. We must not be bound by a framework that is outdated and ineffective. The global financial architecture must reflect current circumstances, be democratic and, until such time, it would be sensible to establish a Reserve Facility of our own to assist fellow developing country in emergency situations. We have another serious problem affecting our home, the Planet Earth. Human activity is causing the global climate to heat-up at an alarming rate. This will have far-reaching consequences for animal and plant life and for human civilization. In our own region, South Asia, sea-level rise resulting from climate change will bring serious consequences to a number of countries, including the inundation of coastal lowlands and the contamination of fresh water sources. Again, our own region will be affected by prolonged droughts, shortages of drinking water and, in some areas, unseasonal rains and glacier melting. All this will result in serious adverse implications for agriculture, fisheries and related industries. There is a clear possibility of environment-related issues becoming a challenge to our region. We must address this difficult problem in a pragmatic manner. I continue to believe that those who polluted our Planet through rapid and indiscriminate industrialization, and who continue to pollute in disproportionate quantities, must bear the primary burden in addressing this problem. Of course developing countries must play their role in addressing the threat of climate change; but this should not be done in a manner where we would have to make unfair sacrifices, compromising progress towards poverty alleviation and the prosperity of our people. It is vital in particular that, in an era of increasing concern for human rights, we address the consequences for the poor of pollution, and ensure mechanisms for compensation when basic rights, for life, for health, for development, are violated. Developing countries must be assisted technologically and financially to follow a different development model from the ones which have resulted in damage to our Planet. There must be recognition of the carbon debt owed by developed countries to developing countries, and the low per capita carbon emission rate of developing countries. Those countries which have managed to preserve their tree cover that is now acting as an Earth Lung should be given credit for what they have preserved and continue to nature. Mr. Chairman, As the current Chair of SAARC, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Sri Lanka has taken the lead in mobilizing our region to address the most acute challenges that currently face our region, namely terrorism and the impact of the global financial crisis. Our collective vision has since resonated in many international fora. SAARC which is a small group of countries has a permanent Secretariat of their own. Unfortunately, the Non -aligned Movement though existing for over five decades has not been able to establish a permanent Secretariat so far. I strongly proposed that we the leaders of Non-aligned countries come together to establish a permanent Secretariat for our movement. Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, On this occasion, let us re-dedicate our selves to work in solidarity towards; Peace and security of societies where any manifestation of terrorism will never be allowed, and the sovereignty of our nation is promoted and reserved; A financial architecture and facilities that are specifically focused on the needs of developing countries; and A green planet with equity best responsibilities and benefits. May the Noble Triple Gem Bless You all. Courtesy: defence.lk