
President Lula calls for enhanced economic ties with Sri Lanka

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President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has underscored the importance of enhancing economic and trade ties between his country and Sri Lanka. He made this call at a discussion with the new Sri Lankan Ambassador to Brazil, A.M.J. Sadiq, who presented his credentials to the President in Brasília last Friday (14th August 2009). Immediately following the presentation of his credentials at a ceremony held at the President's Office in the Brazilian capital, the Ambassador held a wide ranging discussion with President Lula, covering a number of matters of mutual interest. At the outset, Ambassador Sadiq conveyed President Mahinda Rajapaksa's sincere greetings and good wishes to the Brazilian President and reiterated the invitation extended by President Rajapaksa for him to visit Sri Lanka. In this context, the Ambassador recalled the meeting between the two leaders in Rome in June 2008 on the sidelines of the FAO sponsored World Food Security Summit and the subsequent letter of invitation sent by President Rajapaksa to President Lula. President Lula, while expressing his interest to visit Sri Lanka, stated that he would like to initially send his Foreign Minister, Celso Amorim to Sri Lanka ahead of his own visit. Ambassador Sadiq, while welcoming the proposed visit of the Brazilian Foreign Minister to Sri Lanka, briefed President Lula on recent developments in Sri Lanka, especially the success achieved by the Government of President Rajapaksa in eradicating terrorism from the country and the new environment that has been created which is conducive to attracting increased foreign investment and transforming the island into the commercial and business hub of South Asia. He also outlined the attractive incentives offered by the Government of Sri Lanka to foreign investors, and invited Brazilian industrialists to set up their manufacturing units in Sri Lanka, in order to gain better and preferential market access for their products to the rapidly expanding economies in Asia. President Lula responded by stating that he would also like to send his Minister of Development, Industry and External Commerce to Sri Lanka in due course, which would serve to boost trade economic links between the two nations. While no dates have been discussed for the proposed visit of President Lula to Sri Lanka, it is likely that it could take place in the first half of 2010. Ambassador Sadiq conveyed to President Lula, the sincere appreciation of President Mahinda Rajapaksa and the Government of Sri Lanka for the strong support extended by Brazil for Sri Lanka's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. In particular, the Ambassador thanked President Lula for standing firmly by Sri Lanka at the Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in May 2009. In concluding the meeting, the Brazilian President conveyed through the Ambassador, his personal greetings to President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his best wishes for peace and prosperity in Sri Lanka. Embassy of Sri Lanka Brasília 19th August 2009