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## Resettlement of IDPs is our main priority: Bogollagama

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The resettlement of the Internally Displaced Persons in their homes and initiation of their livelihoods are the main priority of the Government of Sri Lanka elucidated Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama during his meeting today (07/10/09) with Mike Foster, the UK Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for International Development. Minister Bogollagama agreed with Foster's observation that much progress had been made since the British Under Secretary of State last visited Sri Lanka in April '09 and the broadening of issues for discussion to those of resettlement, rehabilitation and establishment of livelihoods was encouraging. Foster also observed that much work had taken place in improving the conditions in the welfare villages. Minister Bogollagama explained that while security concerns are paramount, the movement of the IDPs were not restricted and referred to the day pass system in place for this purpose. He also pointed out that the host family programme to take care of some segments of the IDPs had been launched, but the response from volunteers was below expectations, and further efforts are being made to encourage this initiative. With regard to Foster's concerns about the effect that the oncoming monsoon would have on the welfare villages, Minister Bogollagama informed that action had been taken to construct and de-silt storm water and other surface drains.

The Foreign Minister appreciated the humanitarian assistance and the de-mining support that have been extended by the United Kingdom to Sri Lanka. The British Under Secretary stated that enhancing assistance in de-mining would be explored, in order to encourage the return of the displaced. The Minister explained that the progress of resettlement was dependent on de-mining and that such assistance would be welcome. He also appealed for assistance in providing permanent shelter, which he said is an imperative in the re-settlement process. He emphasized that the Government had no hidden agenda in keeping the IDPs in welfare villages. Minister Bogollagama appreciated the United Kingdom's continued interest in helping the people of Sri Lanka, and underscored the need to jointly work with the international community for the welfare of the IDPs. He stated that Sri Lanka looks forward to maintaining the constructive dialogue between the two countries. Mike Foster, UK Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for International Development was on a two day (6-7 October 2009) visit to Sri Lanka. Ministry of Foreign Affairs 07th October 2009 Courtesy: [slmfa.gov.lk](http://slmfa.gov.lk)