Minister Bogollagama expresses appreciation to the Russian Federation's support

Monday, 26 October 2009
Last Updated Tuesday, 27 October 2009

The Russian Federation’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Sergey V. Lavrov, who is currently on a historic one day visit to Sri Lanka held discussions with Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 26th October 2009.

The Russian Foreign Minister, who is the first to visit Sri Lanka in that capacity since Sri Lanka and Russia established Diplomatic Relations 52 years ago, discussed a number of wide ranging issues with his Sri Lankan counterpart. During the discussions, Foreign Minister Bogollagama conveyed the appreciation of the Government of Sri Lanka to the Russian Federation for the unstinted support during Sri Lanka’s fight against terrorism. The Foreign Minister stated that the Russian Federation had, throughout Sri Lanka’s challenge against terrorism, been one of the closest allies by being consistent with its support politically on the need to interdict and neutralize terrorist activities in Sri Lanka. He said this support was reflected not only in the condemnation of heinous terrorist acts by the LTTE but also through policy support and tangible measures. Foreign Minister Bogollagama pointed out that this was done despite the informal pressures which may have been exerted by some misguided entities in the international community against provision of such support to Sri Lanka. He also noted the Russian Federation’s assistance in addressing the post conflict challenges which includes the provision of relief items and US$500,000 through UNHCR. Foreign Minister Bogollagama also stated that in view of the importance human rights issues have gained in the international arena, Sri Lanka and the Russian Federation had a frank exchange of views and it was recognized that all countries were not equal players in the field of human rights, since the dictates of some countries get overriding positions to the point of creating double standards. This, the Foreign Minister said, could be a culmination of some members of the international community unwittingly becoming pawns of groups with misplaced vested interests. Foreign Minister Bogollagama further stated that the two countries were of the view that the international community should alleviate themselves from such machinations and act in accordance with ground realities.The two Ministers also addressed issues concerning the global economic downturn which has affected all the countries. In this context, the discussion of the two Foreign Ministers focused on the necessity for concerted coordinated partnerships, across regions, to overcome the current hiatus and to place structures in place to prevent a future repetition of what we have been experiencing for the past year. Foreign Minister Bogollagama also placed on record Sri Lanka’s appreciation to the offer made by the Russian Federation for the state credit line of US$.300 Million. The two Foreign Ministers also discussed ways and means of furthering economic cooperation and the possibilities of enhancing trade and economic relations while potential for the trade of products such as rubber and rubber based products, gems and jewellery, carbon, coconut and coconut based products, tea, steel, graphite, fisheries, wood based products and pharmaceutical products were recognised. With regard to Russian investments in Sri Lanka, Foreign Minister Lavrov recounted approximately 20 Russian based companies having established in Sri Lanka. The potential for the expansion of economic ties through increased trade and investment being evident was pointed out. In this context, Russia’s interest in oil exploration in the Mannar bay and the rehabilitation of the Sapugaskanda oil refinery was reiterated. It was agreed to work towards an Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation. Foreign Minister Bogollagama and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov discussed the process of integration in the Asia-Pacific region which both countries were focusing on and also noted the cooperative work being done in the SAARC, Asia Cooperation Dialogue Asian regional Forum and the Shanghai Cooperation. During the discussions, it was also noted that bilateral agreements on Air Services, Tourism and Mutual Legal Assistance which are currently at an advance stage of negotiations, would be ready for signature in the near future. Foreign Minister Lavrov will be calling on H.E. President Mahinda Rajapaksa this evening following which the Agreement on ‘Cooperation to Suppress Illicit Traffic in and Abuse of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances; would be signed by the two Foreign Ministers. The MOU on the Prevention of Natural Disasters and Mitigation of their Consequences was signed at the conclusion of the bilateral consultations earlier this morning by the Ambassador for the Russian Federation in Sri Lanka H.E. Vladimir P. Mikhailov and Acting Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights Mr. G.D.K. Amarawardena. Foreign Minister Bogollagama and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov also addressed the local and international media at a media interaction following the conclusion of the bilateral discussions. Foreign Minister Lavrov is also scheduled to deliver an address at the BMICH today.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Colombo

26th October 2009