
UK Parliamentarians hail “remarkable” post-conflict progress

Thursday, 28 October 2010

Last Updated Thursday, 28 October 2010

A cross party delegation from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) – UK Branch, which was in Sri Lanka on the invitation of the Parliament of Sri Lanka said that the progress made by the Government on the resettlement of the internally displaced people in the North and the East was “remarkable”. This was conveyed during an interaction the delegation had with Minister of External Affairs Prof. G. L. Peiris, on 22nd October 2010.

Rt. Hon Paul Murphy, MP (Labour), leader of delegation, on behalf of the delegation expressed appreciation for the opportunity afforded by the Government of Sri Lanka for them to visit the country and to observe first-hand the post –conflict progress made in Sri Lanka. He recalled his previous visit to Sri Lanka in 2006, under very different circumstances and stated that this time, following the delegation’s visit to the North and the East, it was clear that peace had been restored in all parts of the country. The delegation was also appreciative of the opportunity afforded by the Government to visit the few remaining IDP sites and to meet with a cross-section of the people, civil society representatives as well as civilians. The delegation had witnessed that remarkable progress was underway in the country, particularly with the resettlement of IDP’s, reconstruction of infrastructure as well as restoration of security. The Delegation stressed the need for replicating the progress made in the East, particularly in the areas of infrastructure development and economic empowerment, in the North as well. Lord Sheikh, Conservative MP stated that as a Muslim parliamentarian, he was personally impressed by the progress he had witnessed in the Eastern Province where the contribution and participation of Muslims was prominent. Minister Peiris briefed the delegation on the current developments including with regard to the resettlement of the displaced, provision of livelihood for the people and the ongoing focus on infrastructure development. He said that the numbers of IDP’s in the sites were down to around 18,000 from the initial 280,000. As soon as the demining was completed in the areas of original residence of these remaining IDP’s, the objective of the Government was to close down all IDP sites expeditiously. The Government is pleased that the private sector has come forward to provide employment opportunities for the resettled families. In addition to demining and livelihood, other priority areas for the Government are provision of shelter and housing and infrastructural development.

Minister Pieris reiterated the intention of the Government that the progress made in rehabilitation and economic progress needs to be complemented by a parallel political process. Electoral processes which had been suppressed by the LTTE had been revived in the North and the East allowing for Tamil leadership to emerge from these areas through democratic means, while the conduct of free and fair elections at the Provincial and Local Government levels had already taken place. President Mahinda Rajapaksa remains resolved in bringing a lasting solution to address the concerns of all parties. To this end, discussions between the Government and the Tamil National Alliance will resume soon. Elaborating on the measures taken by the Government to have a constructive dialogue with the Tamil Diaspora, the Minister said that the Diaspora has an important role to play for the benefit of the people of the North. In the area of reconciliation and confidence building, the Minister explained the work being done by the Lessons Learnt & Reconciliation Commission. The delegation comprised Rt. Hon Paul Murphy, MP (Labour - Leader of Delegation), Mr. Stephen Hammond, MP (Conservative- Deputy Leader of Delegation), Mr. David Amess, MP (Conservative), Mr. Aidan Burley, MP (Conservative), Lord Dholakia OBE DL (Liberal democrat), Mrs. Helen Grant, MP (Conservative), Rt. Hon. Lord Grocott (Labour), Ms. Fiona O’Donnell, MP (Labour), Lord Sheikh (Conservative), Mr. Andrew Tuggey (Secretary CPA UK Branch) and Miss Hatty Cooper, Secretary to the Delegation. Ministry of External Affairs 22 October 2010