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## Statement by the Ministry of External Affairs

Wednesday, 15 June 2011

Last Updated Wednesday, 10 August 2011

The Government of Sri Lanka has noted the statement by the British Foreign Office Minister for South Asia, Alistair Burt on the Channel 4 documentary telecast on 14th June 2011. This documentary, like the Darusman Report, does no more than put together a sequence of events and images, to justify a conclusion arrived at in advance. The origins of this footage are yet to be established, and no one has so far taken responsibility for its contents. It is a mere collection of visuals previously aired through LTTE websites and a miniscule section of the international media, at the behest of parties with vested interests to undermine the present efforts at reconciliation and development taking place in Sri Lanka. The views expressed in the film are without any guarantee of authenticity.

This is one of the matters before the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission which is scheduled to complete its work by mid-November 2011. When Minister Burt telephoned the Minister of External Affairs during the afternoon of 14th June 2011, Prof. Peiris emphasized that the Sri Lankan Commission is entitled to the space and time to complete its work. He took the opportunity to brief Minister Burt on the significant progress that has been made in a variety of fields. These, he pointed out, include the demining of vast tracts of land, the resettlement of displaced persons, the reintegration into society of former combatants including child soldiers after exposure to programmes of training, the return to their rightful owners of lands previously included in High Security Zones, and the revival of the economy of areas affected by military operations and restoration of livelihoods of those who, for many decades, had been under the yoke of LTTE terrorism. It must be noted that, in the interest of transparency, the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission invited INGOs who have been aggressively critical, to give evidence before the Commission, but this has been publicly rejected by these organizations. It is much to be regretted that Minister Burt has taken no account of the Sri Lankan Government's strong refutation of the suggestion that the Government of Sri Lanka deliberately targeted its own civilians, as alleged in the video. This is in stark contrast with the visible standards maintained by the Sri Lankan Army during a three year long operation to liberate the Northern and Eastern Provinces of the menace of the LTTE, including bringing to safety 300,000 innocent Tamil civilians being held as human shields by the LTTE which has been proscribed as a terrorist organization in 32 countries. At this crucial time what Sri Lanka needs from its friends is not threats but the space and support for restoration of what was lost over three decades and the opportunity to move rapidly forward towards reconciliation and economic development. Ministry of External Affairs Colombo 15th June 2011