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# Statement made at the Parliament by His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapaksa on 25th August 2011

Friday, 26 August 2011

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Spanish Translation As the President who has participated most in the affairs of Parliament since the Executive Presidency was established, I am in Parliament today to further demonstrate by determination that there should be closer links between Parliament and the Presidency. From the time I was elected President I have presented all budgets in Parliament. I was able to obtain the continuous support of Parliament for the economic and development programmes presented in these budgets. I participated at the conclusion of the last budget debate to further widen the cooperation between Parliament and the State.

With all humility I am proud at participating in the Parliamentary Consultative Committee meetings of all Ministries that are under my direct control and by these means carrying out in large measure my duties to Parliament as Minister. In establishing a very strong connection between the Executive and Legislature, we have done a great task on behalf of the country after it was freed from terrorism. It is my belief that through the close connection between the Executive and the Legislature it would be possible to strengthen democracy, establish sustainable good governance, strengthen the economy and further confirm the belief of the people in the process of Parliamentary democracy. Hon. Speaker, The brutal terrorism launched by the LTTE coincident with the destruction of places of worship, livelihoods of the people and property in the Black July Of 1983 created an unfortunate environment where the country had to be governed by Emergency Regulations. The terrorism and insurrection have aroused in the South in 1988/89 and the systemic increase of the assassination of politicians led to justifying the continuation of Emergency Regulations. The State of Emergency was removed with the signing of the Ceasefire Agreement in 2002 with international cooperation seeking to open the way to peace. However, the Emergency Regulations had to be brought back with the LTTE violating this ceasefire agreement on a large number of occasions and demonstrated the height of its terror with the assassination of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar. When I took over the leadership and administration of the country in 2005, what we inherited was this environment of Emergency. Although we made strong efforts to proceed with the peace talks that had been initiated at the time I assumed office in 2005, the brutal killing of people by the LTTE at Kebithigollawa and the later closure of the Mavil Aru Anicut led to our having to launch a humanitarian operation. The liberation of the East and the subsequent liberation of the North from terror was done under this environment. Emergency Regulations became necessary and useful for providing relief to a large number of innocent people who had been taken hostage by the forces of terror and were released with the liberation of the entire North and East from terror, as well as for carrying out urgent measures for their resettlement.

Hon. Speaker, You are aware that even before 2005 there were several occasions when there was censorship of the press under Emergency Regulations. However, although we were compelled to carry out a massive battle against the most ruthless terrorist organization in the world, at no time in the term of our government has there been a control or censorship of the press under Emergency Regulations. Although some sections of the media caused grave obstacles to the humanitarian operation, up to this time we have not carried out any media censorship. I believe this is a very good means of showing the world that we were engaged in a genuine humanitarian operation. It is with considerable regret that I state that this media freedom is being betrayed today to discredit the humanitarian operation that we carried out. The humanitarian operation carried out between June 2006 and May 2009 enabled us to eradicate terrorism from the country. From then on our main responsibility was to open up that terrain for proper livelihoods to the people and for this purpose to remove landmines, supply basic infrastructure facilities all directed at resettling the displaced people. We were able to achieve admirable success in this, of nearly 300,000 persons who were displaced, we have now resettled all but 8,000 in their former places of livelihoods. We have established schools, health centers and administrative facilities in those areas. In order to restore proper community life and provide necessary livelihood facilities, we have restored agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, tourism, commerce and trade and financial activities to necessary levels. At present the people in these areas are harvesting the Yala crop and also reaping a good harvest from onions, vegetables and other supplementary crops. These people are engaged in fisheries and animal husbandry and have begun to enter a higher level of activity in trade and commerce. Towards the sustainable development of these areas we have prioritized construction of roads, railways, ports, airports, irrigation, water supply, power, markets and transport facilities as well as religious and cultural centers, and sports facilities that cover all necessary infrastructure aspects of development. The state investment set apart for this region alone exceeds USD 2000 million. These funds have been obtained as long term loans and assistance from different countries and financial institutions as well as from the income earned by the government from taxes and other sources of income for development. We expect a very high level of development in this area within the next two years. Hon. Speaker, Not only has the entire country been freed of terrorism and reconstruction been done in these areas that suffered under terrorism, within this short period we have also held local government elections and by this strengthened a system of democratic administration. It is our expectation to hold elections to the provincial council in the next year. By these means we have been able to give the people of the North the same rights and opportunities as available to people in other regions to participate in the election of Pradeshiya Sabas, Provincial Councils, members of Parliament and the President. Hon. Speaker, For the purpose of proper administration and good governance we have appointed District Secretaries to all districts, and the necessary Divisional Secretaries, Grama Niladharis, doctors and teachers necessary for the health and education sectors and for all other services in the different regions. Through this widening of the public service we have built a necessary environment to cater to the necessities of the people in these areas. In order to broaden the language capabilities of officials in those areas and to enable public

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officers in other areas to work in all languages, the government has taken action to carry out a national policy on language. Hon. Speaker, We have achieved a broad level of progress in economic development too. In 2010, we were able to take the speed of the economic growth of the country to 8%. Statistics show that this trend has prevailed in the first six months of this year too. We now see lowering of the rate of inflation and the assurance of greater food security through better availability of food and vegetables. Unemployment has reduced up to 5%. Arrival of tourists has risen to a high level of around 700,000. In all parts of the country there is now an environment in which both foreign and domestic tourists can move about in freedom. Investment activities are reaching a higher level. As a result of the rapid growth of the export sector and the flow of foreign currency to the country, the foreign reserves have now reached a level of 8 billion US dollars. Due to stability of the exchange rates, the uncertainties that prevailed in international trading activities have been largely eliminated. Due to the low interest rates the obtaining of loans by the private sector is on the increase. There is wide infrastructure development in sectors such as ports, airport, highways, power, irrigation and water supply. Through the "Divi Neguma" programme there is increased self sufficiency in agricultural sector and in domestic economy. Through the spread of this economic progress to every corner of the country, it has been possible to bring to the people their rights in education, health services and social security as envisaged in the forward vision of "Mahinda Chinthana". Hon. Speaker, From the time when terrorist activities ended in May 2009 until today there have been no reports of any terrorist activities. During this period through the conduct of several elections, the country moved further towards democracy. Society has accepted that these were peaceful and fair elections. Accordingly, in the recent past we have been removing various clauses of the Emergency Regulations and steadily bringing society to normal administration. Internationally too, it is now accepted that there are no reports of terrorist activity in Sri Lanka. We have also introduced to Parliament internationally recognized laws and regulations to avoid monetary activities, exchange of goods, drug trafficking, banking and financial risks carried out by terrorists engaged in further nurturing terrorism. In addition to strengthening National security we have worked towards preempting opportunities for terrorism to emerge through these laws and regulations. We are proud to mention that our government has succeeded in protecting the law and order and peace through rules and regulations approved by Parliament based on the Constitution. Therefore, it is our responsibility to protect the democratic freedom achieved after many years. It is under the ordinary law that the state administration, police and the judiciary take actions against those who take the law into their hands and thereby disturb peace and stability. It is a great victory achieved by the people. This success was possible for the country because our heroic soldiers accomplished the humanitarian mission with great dedication and in an exemplary manner; because the people of this country extended their generosity and patience. What we can benefit from this is immense. We laid a foundation to strengthen our country as a rising democracy in Asia.

Hon. Speaker, For several years this Parliament has extended the Emergency Regulations every month. Some voted against it while some abstained. This supreme Parliament is enriched by representing all political parties in the country. Through this representation we can consider Honorable Speaker and 225 honorable members as a great asset that brings together the multiplicity of views in the country. It is nurtured by all ethnicities, all religions as well as those who hold liberal and progressive views. All of them have gained wide experience in the recent past. Among these representatives are about 40 young members. We have for the first time an opportunity to find solutions for problems in our country within a democratic framework and without any influence from terrorists. Therefore, on behalf of the people of this country, I request Parliament to grant this opportunity to them through Parliament. I would like to present to this supreme Parliament, the proposal to repeal the Emergency Regulations for administrative activities to function democratically under the ordinary law. This is because I am satisfied with that fact that there is no longer a need for extending the Emergency Regulations for the administration of the country now. Therefore I propose not to extend the Emergency Regulations.