
Sri Lanka awaits to welcome you - President tells CHOGM leaders

Tuesday, 01 November 2011

Last Updated Wednesday, 02 November 2011

My country and my people who are experiencing economic revival, peace and tranquility throughout the country after many decades look forward to welcoming all of you to Colombo in 2013 President Mahinda Rajapaksa said. Addressing the concluding session of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Perth today President Rajapaksa said that CHOGM comes to Asia after 22 years, last being in Malaysia. "I have no doubt that all my Asian colleagues will, in 2013, join me and the people of Sri Lanka in welcoming you to our region, which is home to over two thirds of the population of the Commonwealth, to deliberate on all issues in which we are collectively interested", he said. Full text of the speech made by President Rajapaksa during the final session of CHOGM 2011

Madam Chair, Excellencies

At Port of Spain, Heads of Government accepted Sri Lanka's offer to host CHOGM 2013 in Colombo and reaffirmed by all of you in Perth. This is an honour for the people of Sri Lanka, who look forward to receiving each and every one of you in Colombo for our next meeting. We have already started the preparations for the Summit in Sri Lanka. Before I proceed any further, it is my duty to thank our gracious host, Her Excellency Julia Gillard, the Prime Minister of Australia for the excellent arrangements in place for the CHOGM 2011. I also must thank the Government and the people of Australia for all the hospitality provided to us. Further, Australia's experience in holding this Summit will certainly be useful to us. I also wish to thank the Secretary General and his staff for the assistance provided to us to make this Summit a success. Excellencies, my country, Sri Lanka, has been from ancient times the meeting point between the East and the West. We can boast of some of the world's most famous beaches, to lofty mountains, some of which are home to the world's best known 'Ceylon tea'. As an island we also have an amazing variety of flora and fauna and safari parks teeming with wildlife. Our cultural sites are among UNESCO's global heritage listing. Madam Chair, Sri Lanka is one of Asia's oldest functioning democracies, enjoying universal adult franchise since 1931 and with a recorded history of over 2500 years. My country has just come out of 30 years of violent terrorism unleashed by the world's most ruthless terrorist organization. Sri Lanka is now full of promise, with an economy poised to take off into a period of further rapid economic and social development. We have achieved a healthy 8% growth rate last year, with the former theatre of conflict marking a 22% growth. The country's peaceful environment, complemented by political stability, has resulted in an increase in foreign direct investment. Madam Chair, with my country's economic prospects doubling, our sovereign ratings by international institutions have been upgraded for a second consecutive year. It is a source of deep satisfaction to us that we have been able to achieve this result and we are happy to share our experience with our partners in the Commonwealth. Thus, the Business Forum in Colombo will be enriched by this additional dimension and the networking with the Asian business community, will be a particularly useful feature. Madam Chair, Excellencies, my Government has paid attention to the call by young people to be facilitated as drivers of economic development and we have therefore given priority to 'youth empowerment' with over a quarter of our population being under 35. We hosted the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in Colombo, in 2008. We look forward to the Youth Forum on the sidelines of the CHOGM in Colombo. Madam Chair, Sri Lanka has an extremely vibrant civil society. The civil society network within the Commonwealth has always been a very effective instrument in promoting and ensuring commitment to our shared values. It is in this context of economic revival, peace and tranquility throughout my country that my people look forward to welcoming all of you to Colombo in 2013. Sri Lanka has much experience in hosting international and regional Summits, starting with the Non-Aligned Summit that we successfully hosted in 1976. We already have much of the infrastructure, which will be further improved and strengthened well ahead of schedule. Madam Chair, Excellencies, CHOGM comes to Asia after 22 years, last being in Malaysia. I have no doubt that all my Asian colleagues will, in 2013, join me and the people of Sri Lanka in welcoming you to our region, which is home to over two thirds of the population of the Commonwealth, to deliberate on all issues in which we are collectively interested. Madam Chair, Excellencies, I would now like you to view a brief video presentation on Sri Lanka in our preparation as host for CHOGM 2013. I thank you.

Source: PRIU