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## Minister of External Affairs called upon the Ambassador of France on the issue of 'La Poste' stamps

Tuesday, 17 January 2012

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Minister of External Affairs, Professor G.L. Peiris called in the Ambassador of France to Sri Lanka Christine Robichon, on Tuesday 3rd January 2012, to register Sri Lanka's acute concern on the issue of four stamps by 'La Poste' of France depicting images related to the LTTE including its insignia, while being a proscribed group in France.

Minister Peiris observed that while the publishing of these stamps had not been facilitated by the Government of France, however, it is its responsibility to ensure that such publication should not have happened and their circulation be cancelled with immediate effect. He emphasized that this action by a front organization of the LTTE would portray the French attitude to global terrorism in an erroneous manner as France has unambiguously postulated its opposition. Therefore, he expressed the confidence that action would be taken by the Government of France not to give credence to such moves by a terrorist front. Minister Peiris underscored that the history and modus operandi of the terrorist group and its leadership are well known and has been working for the dismemberment of a friendly country. Professor Peiris pointed out the regrettable phenomenon of diaspora groups engaging with host governments at different levels, especially in the West, culminating in misplaced attitudes being demonstrated by those countries towards Sri Lanka. He stated that the Sri Lankan public must have the conviction that Western governments are seeking to achieve their wellbeing. However, he said, that these country's bona-fides come into question amongst the people of Sri Lanka when situations of this nature arise, as they give rise to suspicion. The Minister however, stated that the Government of Sri Lanka has to take on board public opinion in Sri Lanka, especially since the terrorist group rump is seeking to achieve their objectives through different means. Minister Peiris protested in the strongest possible terms, and urged the French Ambassador for her government to take immediate action for the non-circulation of the stamps. Ambassador Robichon brought to the attention of the Minister a Press Statement released by the French Embassy in Colombo stating that these stamps are neither a part of the official philatelic programme of France nor on sale in the French Post Office. It has been explained that individuals had used the online service offered by 'La Poste' through which customers could order limited quantities of personalized stamps under their responsibility and specific conditions. She referred to the fact that 'La Poste' had failed to detect the violations of the conditions and had printed the stamps by mistake. Further elaborating, the Ambassador stated that having been informed by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the LTTE is a terrorist group listed by the EU in 2006, 'La Poste' had assured that no such stamps will be printed further. On inquiry by the Minister on the quantum of stamps already printed, the French Ambassador confirmed the publication of 360 stamps. While noting that le 'Groupe La Poste' is an independent, public, industrial and commercial institution, Minister Peiris observed that it is an obligation on the part of the Government of France to ensure that moves of this nature do not take place. Referring to a news item appearing on the Website of the terrorist group, where it calls for these stamps to be used by its people when sending letters and parcels, as a duty to use them to preserve their pride and historical excellence, Prof. Peiris pointed out that this is a devious manner of fund raising by this proscribed organization. The Minister underlined the importance of ensuring the halt to fund raising activities abroad by the remnants of the terrorist group in order that there would not be an indulgence for acts of terrorism in the future. While noting the assurance by 'La Poste' on the non publication of the stamps in question in the future following the recognition of the listing of the LTTE as a terrorist organization, the Minister strongly reiterated the need to prevent the use of the stamps originally printed and that the Government of France should investigate the persons or organization that ordered the printing of the stamps, especially considering the monetary dimension since there has been a public call for the use of these stamps. Ministry of External Affairs Colombo January 03, 2012.