Visit to Sri Lanka by His Excellency Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine

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The President of the State of Palestine His Excellency Mahmoud Abbas visited Sri Lanka from 15th to 17th April 2012. He was accompanied by several senior Ministers and PLO Representatives including the Minister of Foreign Affairs His Excellency Riad Malki.The Palestinian President called on His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, the President and had bilateral meeting with the President. Several Senior Ministers also took part at the bilateral discussion.Later in the evening, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Riad Malki called on Hon. Prof Peiris, Minister of External Affairs and had detailed discussions on bilateral issues of mutual interest. Prof Peiris reiterated Sri Lanka’s commitment and support to the Palestinian cause and also recalled the President’s message at various international fora on Palestine issue conveying Sri Lanka’s firm and unequivocal support for the Palestinian peoples’ struggle, including the right to Statehood.Sri Lanka has supported the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their right to an independent state based on the UN Security Council Resolution 242, 338, 1397 and 1515 and other relevant resolutions. Prof. Peiris also highlighted that visits at the high level between the two countries would strengthen the existing warm and cordial relations and that the Government is very much pleased to receive a high level delegation from Palestine. The Minister also recalled the recent visit of Hon. Namal Rajapaksa to Palestine and the visit of the Palestinian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities to Sri Lanka to attend the EXPO 2012 exhibition. The Palestinian Foreign Minister thanked the Government of Sri Lanka for its continuous support to the Government and the people of Palestine and that the relations between the two countries have reached to the highest from the time President Rajapaksa assumed office. He also stated that there is much potential between the two countries, particularly in the field of trade, investment, economic and tourism for further cooperation and that the signing of the Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion and the Protocol on Political Consultation between the two countries during the current State Visit would further strengthen the existing friendly relations between the two countries.The Palestinian Foreign Minister also extended an invitation to the External Affairs Minister to visit Palestine on a date that could be mutually agreed upon. He also stated that he was very glad to witness the remarkable economic development achieved by the Government of Sri Lanka following the defeat of terrorism two years ago and stated that he was happy to witness the stability and the economic prosperity prevailing in this country and the amicable co-existence of all sections of people of Sri Lanka.The External Affairs Minister Prof. Peiris thanked the Palestinian Minister for extending the invitation for him to visit Palestine and assured that he would undertake a visit soon and that he look forward to the continuous engagement with him on the issues of mutual interest.The Palestinian Ambassador to Sri Lanka His Excellency Dr. Anwar Al-Agha and the Sri Lanka’s Representative to the State of Palestine is Excellency Dr.T. Jayasinghe also attended the meeting.