Issues of concern to be solved in keeping with countries' value systems: Professor G.L. Peiris

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Countries have to solve issues of concern in keeping with their values systems with primacy accorded to local procedures, as the needs of the country and its people are important, observed Minister of External Affairs Professor G.L. Peiris during his bilateral meetings yesterday (24th September) on the margins of the 67thSession of the UNGA, with the Deputy Prime Ministers & Foreign Ministers of Oman and the Czech Republic, Foreign Ministers of Bahrain, Cyprus, the Maldives and the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. Minister Peiris is leading the Sri Lanka delegation to the UN General Assembly session this year.

Professor Peiris elaborating stressed, that there is a point beyond which external interference was unhelpful, as it could result in the distortion of issues. He also emphasized the need for equal treatment of countries and that there was no place for different standards to be applied with regard to overcoming domestic challenges. Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al Khalifa, Foreign Minister of Bahrain pointed out that undue pressure from external sources was counterproductive, as it takes away the focus off the local people and detracted from the related issues. He therefore asserted that Governments are best placed to decide on responding to the challenges in relation to its people. He appreciated Sri Lanka’s initiative of opening a diplomatic mission in Bahrain and shared the possibility of reciprocating by establishing an Embassy in Colombo as Sri Lanka historically has been extremely important to his country and such a presence would promote shared values of the two countries.The Czech Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg, announced the opening of an Embassy in the near future in Colombo. Recognizing the economic potential of the two countries, the Ministers whole heartedly agreed on the need to forge business links. As an initial step they acknowledged the need for furthering contact between the respective Chambers of the two countries. In this context, gems and jewellery, garments, construction, power and energy generation, electronics, infrastructure development, waste disposal and construction of low cost housing were areas identified for the exchange of technical expertise and training and trading. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Oman, Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, spoke of the warm relationship and the longstanding historical links between Sri Lanka and Oman. While Minister Peiris pointed out that bilateral trade and economic links need to be enhanced, he also observed that the reservoir of values between the two countries have much to contribute and seek cooperation with other countries in the region to present diverse cultures to the world. It was stated that the initial work to establish an Embassy of Oman in Colombo had been completed. They also discussed the need for cooperating in maritime security issues, including people smuggling and piracy. Minister Peiris informed his Omani counterpart of Sri Lanka’s resolve to cooperate with the Gulf Council Countries. Foreign Minister of Cyprus Mrs. Erato Kozakou Marcoullis discussed the availability of greater opportunities for employment of Sri Lankans in Cyprus. Pointing out that the Sri Lankan expatriates are the most sizeable in Cyprus, she acknowledged their social cohesion in that country. Foreign Minister of the Maldives Dr. Abdul Samad Abdullah and Minister Peiris discussed issues pertaining to the Commonwealth. Both Ministers acknowledged the need for close cooperation in this field. They also discussed the present developments in the Maldives. Ms. Wendy R. Sherman, US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs observed that they were glad that the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the LLRC had been evolved and appreciated that Sri Lanka had presented elements on the manner to proceed on its implementation. She acknowledged that every country has its own aspirations and therefore external entities are unable to find the right prescription to meet domestic challenges. Minister Peiris also met Mr. Peter Maurer, President of the ICRC and discussed the need to evolve a new mandate in keeping with the transformed situation following transition from conflict to serenity. He also met with Hugo Hans Siblesz, Secretary General of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) of which Minister Peiris had been on the Board of Governors for Sri Lanka. They discussed the need for concluding a host country agreement between Sri Lanka and the PCA, and also opportunities for training in arbitration of Government officials considering Sri Lanka having been a pioneer in this field and the envisaged establishment of an international arbitration centre in the country. Ministry of External Affairs25th September 2012