
Professor G.L. Peiris meets UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon

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Appreciating the willingness on the part of the Government of Sri Lanka, to engage with the UN system as demonstrated by the invitation to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the recent visit of the technical team from her office, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon at a meeting in New York on Tuesday with External Affairs Minister Professor G.L. Peiris, stated that it would be a positive step for such engagement to continue at a senior working level in order to be updated on developments in Sri Lanka.

The Secretary General welcomed the positive developments that have taken place in Sri Lanka including the complete resettlement of internally displaced persons and the closure of the resettlement village at Menik Farm, holding of Provincial Council elections in the Eastern Province, steps taken to reach out to civil society and the Action Plan to implement the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission, noting that mutual understanding and continued cooperation would assist Sri Lanka to benefit from UN expertise. He also briefed the Minister of External Affairs on the Change Management Reforms of the UN including the mobility of the Organization's Staff. Further, he explained that the UN will also seek to strengthen partnership with Member States, by forging relations with the business community, philanthropists, religious leaders and civil society through a formalized mechanism. Minister Peiris outlined the significant measures undertaken by the Government to bring about reconciliation including rehabilitation of ex combatants, complete resettlement of IDPs, ongoing de-militarization of the Northern Province with reduction in the number of military personnel by approximately 50% as well as the type of functions handled by the Military, the holding of Provincial Council elections and the efforts to bring all political parties together through the Parliamentary Select Committee consultation process. He added that the preparations for the Universal Periodic Review in November 2012 had commenced with all relevant agencies coordinating their efforts towards this end. Noting that the climate in the country was now conducive to trade and investment, Minister Peiris added further that the Commonwealth Business Forum would be held in Sri Lanka in 2013 on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). He briefed the Secretary General on Sri Lanka's hosting of this international event. Responding to the Secretary General regarding youth employment, Minister Peiris stated that the entry of foreign companies and hotel chains to Sri Lanka as well as vigorous activity by its own private sector after the eradication of terrorism, had opened up many opportunities for employment for the youth. He added that Sri Lanka laid much focus on the social mobility of youth and that the World Youth Conference would be held in Sri Lanka in 2014. Minister Peiris had separate meetings with Ms. Susana Malcorra, Chef de Cabinet and UN Under-Secretary-General and Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Undersecretary General, Department of Political Affairs of the UN and exchanged views.