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## Major Commonwealth Business Council Event in Sri Lanka

Monday, 15 October 2012

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Professor G.L. Peiris, Minister of External Affairs, had a discussion with Dr. Mohan Kaul, Chairman of the Commonwealth Business Council on arrangements for the Business Forum to be held on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit. Participating in the discussion was Mr. Neomal Perera, Deputy Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Karunatilaka Amunugama, Secretary to the Ministry, Mr. Gamini Wickramasinghe, Chairman of the Bank of Ceylon. The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, the National Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce & Industry and the SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry were represented, by Mrs. Alikie Perera, Mr. Ashoka Hettigoda, Mr. Kumar Mallimarachchi, Mr. Nalin Attygalle and Mr. Kosala Wickramanayake. Observing that the thematic context of the Business Forum should have a direct bearing and relevance to Sri Lanka as the country emerges from the shadow of the terrorist conflict, External Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris encouraged a specific emphasis on the youth, particularly in the rural areas, when he met the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) Chairman Dr. Mohan Kaul today. The delegation is visiting Sri Lanka to discuss preparatory arrangements for the Commonwealth Business Forum scheduled to be held with the overarching theme "Partnering for wealth creation and social development: the Commonwealth, Indian Ocean and SAARC" in Colombo on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in November 2013. The launch for the Commonwealth Business Forum 2013 will be held under the distinguished patronage of President Mahinda Rajapaksa later this week. Minister Peiris stressed that the development of entrepreneurial skills and talents of the youth through training and access to employment opportunities, would enable social mobility. He added that while the educated and highly skilled Sri Lankan workforce was already a source of pride, enabling the youth to obtain the maximum benefit from such opportunities afforded by local and foreign investment and international business events, would further strengthen the reservoir of human resources in the country. Referring to the useful discussion between the delegation from the Commonwealth Business Council and the Chambers of Commerce the previous day, Minister Peiris encouraged the active participation of the National Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Sri Lanka, the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and the private sector at the Business Forum. He further noted that the participation of the two groups of interlocutors from the Government and the Trade Chambers would ensure a vibrant and successful event. The Minister was also of the view that non-Commonwealth countries, especially in the Indian Ocean region, should be invited for this Forum as it would be beneficial to all participants. Minister Peiris stated that much primacy is being accorded to the Commonwealth Business Forum considering the economic benefit which could be accrued from this event. The delegation from the CBC are on a seven day visit to the country to identify venues and make initial preparations for the event and will meet senior Government officials and business leaders during their stay.

Ministry of External Affairs 9th October 2012