

CO-CHAIR MEETING 19 DECEMBER 2005 – FINAL STATEMENT

The Co-Chairs of the Tokyo Donor Conference met in Brussels on 19 December 2005 to review the situation in Sri Lanka. A representative of the Indian Government met separately with the Co-Chairs for an exchange of views.

The Co-Chairs note that Sri Lanka is facing a crucial choice between increased violence and re-invigorating the peace process. The prospects for long-term peace lie in the hands of the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE. The Sri Lankan people want peace. A failure to respond to this desire would be a tragic step backward.

The Co-Chairs note the recent LTTE appeal for “a reasonable political framework”. However, the Co-Chairs condemn the LTTE’s enforced boycott of the Presidential election in parts of the North and East, which deprived Tamil voters of their right to vote. The Co-Chairs also condemn in the strongest terms the recent escalation in violence in the North and East. The Co-Chairs call on the LTTE to put an immediate end to their on-going campaign of violence and again urge the LTTE to demonstrate their commitment to the Ceasefire Agreement and the peace process. Failure to demonstrate a willingness to change would not be without serious consequences.

The Co-Chairs recognise that activities of paramilitary groups are another of the causes for the deteriorating situation. They urge the Government to ensure that such groups cease their paramilitary activities, as a demonstration of its commitment to a peaceful way forward.

The Co-Chairs welcome the agreement of the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE to hold immediate talks to review the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement, and also welcome Japan’s offer to host these. They strongly urge both sides to start such talks without further delay or prevarication.

The Co-Chairs welcome the President’s aim to develop a credible political platform in the South to take the peace process forward. The Co-Chairs call on all in the South, particularly the main political parties, to contribute constructively and flexibly. The Co-Chairs believe that such a settlement should be based on a united Sri Lanka, taking account of the aspirations of all communities.

The Co-Chairs commend the Muslim community for their restraint in the face of recent provocations.

The Co-Chairs welcome the Sri Lankan Government’s confirmation of its confidence to the Norwegian facilitation, as well as that of the LTTE. The Co-Chairs state their full and unequivocal support for Norway’s efforts, building on progress made in peace talks held since the Ceasefire Agreement. The Co-Chairs equally express their fullest support for the work of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) in an increasingly volatile environment. Ensuring a conducive environment for continued SLMM operations and the security of the SLMM staff remains vital.

Finally, as a further sign of commitment to the peaceful resolution of the civil conflict, the Co-Chairs express their readiness to hold their next meeting in Sri Lanka close to the fourth anniversary of the Ceasefire Agreement.