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Sri Lanka calls for international action to stem glorification of terrorism

Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the UN in Geneva Ravinatha Aryasinha has asked that greater attention be paid in Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, to the role of terrorist support networks that take the form of front organizations, the challenge posed by the abuse of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and the propriety of the use or display of terrorist group emblems, insignia and symbols. He emphasized that they communicate the message, purpose, history, and goals of terrorist organizations and as such contribute to the creation of an organizational culture of incitement, hatred, and radicalization, that is encouraged to be emulated. Noting that while conscious that there remains a tension between the concepts of 'freedom of expression' and 'counter terrorism' with respect to these issues, it was nevertheless important that these challenges also be addressed squarely in earnest, in order that we arrive at a consensus as to where freedom of expression ends and supporting or glorification of terrorism begins. He added that our failure to do so, will seriously erode the fight against terrorism, and permit the perpetuation of the sense that double standards were being applied with respect to these issues, which turns a blind eye to the actions of some groups, while pursuing those of others.

Ambassador Aryasinha made these observations when he addressed the International Counter-Terrorism Focal Points Conference on 'Addressing Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Terrorism and Promoting Regional Cooperation', held in Geneva on 13-14 June 2013. The conference organized by the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force was part of the CTITF Global Initiative on implementing the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy.

Ambassador Aryasinha said the challenge terrorism poses and the necessity for international cooperation to eradicate it was fully understood by Sri Lanka well before the events of 9/11 and the UN Security Council Resolutions 1373 and 1267, and that notwithstanding the

Government of Sri Lanka eradicating terrorism in the country a little over 4 years ago, Sri Lanka had not forgotten the damage terrorism causes.

In his address he drew attention to Sri Lanka's experience in successfully defeating the LTTE which was one of the world's most ruthless terrorist groups, and the manner in which the Government of Sri Lanka had domestically, regionally and internationally contributed to the building of the evolving international legal regime relating to countering terrorism and in meeting its international obligations in this regard.

Ambassador Aryasinha said since the military defeat of the LTTE in Sri Lanka in May 2009, besides the radicalized activism of LTTE front organizations in several European capitals, the arrest of 32 LTTE activists in Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland and the conviction of a further 28 in France, the Netherlands and Belgium, known activists continue to advocate mono-ethnic separatism in Sri Lanka while espousing the ideology of the LTTE, using its money and being manipulated by its surviving military leaders, who are primarily domiciled in Europe. The continuance of the LTTE's activities and its network of front organizations in Europe was also manifest in an appeal filed on behalf of the LTTE to the European Court of Justice on 11 April 2011 for the de-listing of the LTTE from the EU list of terrorist entities. While the TE-SAT 2011 report of Europol noted that "Separatist terrorist groups such as the PKK/KONGRA-GEL and LTTE are involved in the trafficking of drugs and human beings to raise funds for their terrorism activities", the US Global Terrorism Report of 2012 confirms continuing concerns regarding the LTTE, noting that the "the LTTE's financial network of support continued to operate throughout 2011" and that "the group employed charities as fronts to collect and divert funds for their activities". Recent incidents in Tamil Nadu too are indications of the continuing attempts by the LTTE to regroup overseas.

(Full statement is attached)