

**Security Council Open Debate on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security:
Interdependence Between Security and Development**
11th February 2011, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by H.E. Mr. Palitha T. B. Kohona, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations.

Let me at the outset thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this timely debate on security and development.

We endorse the statement made by Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

These deliberations will no doubt further inform our thinking on this crucial area and in our view are key to addressing security issues. Today's discussions will help us to expand our focus beyond the Security Council's primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

Sri Lanka's Government recognized very early that security and development went together. As the Secretary-General has said, without development, security will soon become untenable, and security is an essential element of development. In fact, successive Governments acknowledged that development was a key element in countering the security threat posed to my country by the terrorist group, the LTTE. Accordingly, over the years significant attention was given to a complex range of economic development initiatives.

Recognizing the importance of education in this approach, successive Governments, while maintaining funding for education elsewhere in the country, never reduced the funding and support provided to schools in areas then dominated by the LTTE, despite the consistent threat of children being recruited as child combatants by the terrorist group. As we know, UNICEF records indicate that over 5,700 children were recruited as child combatants by the LTTE. The number may have been much higher.

Similarly, conscious of the need to maintain health standards throughout the country, the Government continued to pump significant resources into areas dominated by the LTTE to maintain hospitals, clinics and medical staff.

Once the conflict ended, the Government became even more conscious of the need to expedite development and paid special attention to rehabilitation and reconstruction. Hundreds of miles of paved roads linking villages to towns were constructed. The national electricity grid was extended to many remote areas of the country, and bridges were built. Foreign direct investors were encouraged to locate their businesses away from the capital. Special attention is being paid to reviving agriculture, fisheries and tourism in the formerly conflict-affected areas. These efforts are bearing significant results.

The economic policies of the Government have borne fruit. Despite the fact that the 27 years of conflict cost the country \$200 billion in lost opportunities, the per capita income doubled between 2005 and 2010 as Sri Lanka became a middle income country. Ninety-seven per cent of our children attend primary schools. Maternal mortality and child mortality have dropped to an all-time low level. Inflation and unemployment are at a record low, and absolute poverty has decreased to 8.7 per cent.

Those indicators are clear evidence of Government policies that recognize economic development as a vital precondition to achieving security and normalcy. In fact, stability and economic development were used as incentives to encourage the Tamil civilians to leave the grip of the LTTE during the conflict. In 2007 and 2008, over 60,000 Tamil civilians fled the LTTE-dominated areas to live in the south of the country.

The same economic focus has been maintained by the Government since the end of the conflict in May 2009. Since then, despite dire predictions of the long-term concentration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps and of hunger, malnutrition and disease, the Government, convinced of the need to restore economic activity in the formerly conflict-affected areas, has successfully returned 95 per cent of the IDPs to their own villages and towns within a very short period. The Government recognized early that keeping the IDPs in camps was a costly proposition, both in dollars and public relations, and that it would be much better to make them economically active in their own villages as early as possible. The Government will continue to provide assistance to those people so that they may resume normal economic activities.

There have been no instances of diseases. Malnutrition is no higher among the people who returned to their villages from the IDP camps than in certain other areas of the country, and it is currently the subject of a broad study.

The Government recognizes that problems still remain. While many irrigation canals have been repaired, hundreds of miles of roads have been reconstructed and electricity supplies have been restored or connected, much more needs to be done to restore the lives and livelihoods of the displaced to a reasonable level, including by clearing mines from villages. The unprecedented floods that have inundated the lands of the same unfortunate people have put the clock back on our targets. But Sri Lanka has clearly recognized that economic development is a key to ensuring security, restoring stability and rekindling hope for the future among the conflict-affected people.

My delegation is of the view that better education, social advancement and economic development are key to addressing the root causes of violence. Our focus on those areas needs to be maintained. The multilateral system, led by the United Nations, must enhance coordination, cooperation and effective action with the goal of supporting development as a key element of ensuring security.