



Press Release

Sri Lanka welcomes the announcement of the lifting of the ban on imports of fishery products from Sri Lanka by the European Union

Sri Lanka welcomes the European Commission decision to delist Sri Lanka and to grade the country's achievements as remarkable after assessing the tangible progress over the last fifteen months while addressing all related issues in the management of the high seas fisheries policy of Sri Lanka. European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella says 'Sri Lanka has now a robust legal and policy framework to fight illegal fishing activities.' It may be recalled that the European Union first issued an official warning (Yellow Card) on 15th November 2012 and a ban (Red card) in October 2014 to Sri Lanka.

Since the election of President Maithripala Sirisena, the Government embarked on a thorough programme to address Sri Lanka's commitments and obligations under international and regional conventions/agreements/resolutions on conservation and sustainable management of fishery resources, i.e. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of December 10 (UNCLOS), 1982, United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement of 1995 (UNFSA), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (FAO IPOA-IUU) of 2001, the FAO Compliance agreement, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing of 2009 and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC).

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe chaired a High Level Steering Committee immediately after his appointment in January last year and took direct charge of addressing this critical national issue affecting the fishery industry, which experienced a loss of export revenue and the drastic impact on livelihoods of a community of nearly 2.6 million people in Sri Lanka, by first, making an appeal to the European Union by letter dated 14th January 2015 and arranging for the visit of the Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera to Brussels in January 2015, the second official visit overseas of the Foreign Minister.

These initiatives led to the renewal of the dialogue with the EU, which was managed and monitored by the High Level Steering Committee on addressing issues related to the ban chaired by the Prime Minister and convened by the senior officials of the Prime Minister's Office. Since then, Sri Lanka has taken concrete measures in addressing all issues and shown commitment to complete structural reforms in order to address illegal fishing in the EEZ and international waters.

State institutions, led by the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development and the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Departments of Attorney General and Legal Draftsman and the Embassy of Sri Lanka to the EU in Brussels, under the guidance of the Prime Minister, worked assiduously in fulfilling all issues of relevance in keeping with Sri Lanka's commitments and obligations under the international and regional conventions/agreements/resolutions on conservation and sustainable management of fishery resources.

Sri Lanka will continue to further strengthen relations with the European Union particularly the economic partnership in a mutually beneficial manner in pursuance of the Government's policy of closer engagement.

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