



**Statement on the Recent Developments in Sri Lanka's National Fisheries Governance Policy by Mrs. Mangalika Adikari, Secretary of the Ministry of Fisheries & Aquatic Resources Development of the Government of Sri Lanka, at the Press Conference in Brussels on 27/04/2016**

Good Afternoon,

H. E. Rodney Perera, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka and the officials of the Embarcy, members of Sri Lankan Team of Exporters and the journalists.

It gives me a great pleasure, to be in Brussels, visiting at Seafood Expo Global 2016, my first ever visit to this exposition, and attending this Media Briefing, jointly organised by the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Brussels, and the Seafood Exporters Association of Sri Lanka, and Le Lien Ltd of UK as the co-host.

I, wish to extend our sincere appreciation, to the Seafood Exporters Association of Sri Lanka, for having extended the invitation to **Hon. Mahinda Amaraweera**, the Minister of Fisheries to grace this event. But unfortunately, due to unavoidable and urgent official commitments, he could not be present at this event. I am therefore, pleased to represent him, and share the views, from the GOSL point of view.

As you are aware, until very recently, Sri Lanka was identified, as a non-cooperating third country, by the European Union under the EU – IUU Fishing Regulation, which was mainly due the claim, that Sri Lanka had weak monitoring and surveillance systems, and non-deterrent sanction system, in place in controlling its fleet fishing in the high seas.

It was a compliance issue, rather than a violation of international law. The lack of compliance, with non-binding recommendations, and resolutions related to IOTC, has also been greatly considered in making EU's determination on Sri Lanka.

This situation brought about drastic consequences affecting the livelihood of nearly 2.6 million people and an sea food export industry, which is the ninth largest export sector and capable of generating an export income close to 120 Million Euros per annum in Europe alone. The trade loss due to the ban in 2015 alone is estimated to be of 51 Million Euros, recording 73% reduction in exports to the European Union in 2015 over 2014. *(Please refer attached Charts for further details)*

Since the red card was issued to Sri Lanka on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015, much has happened, in a most positive and constructive way, towards the country meeting its obligations, towards the global fight against IUU fishing.

The GOSL immediately decided to set up a high level task force, under the direct guidance of the Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The purpose was to create a road map, and oversee due process, guiding Sri Lanka into a position, where it would comply with, its international and regional obligations, and thereby meeting the EU - IUU fishing requirements.

But, we are delighted, that the European Commission has finally recommended, to the Council of the European Union, to lift the red card given to Sri Lanka fifteen months ago, allowing Sri Lanka to be back in the business, and achieve its rightful position in the European market.

When we look back at the past year, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development (MFARD), and the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR), under the leadership and the guidance, of the Hon. Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development, have achieved tremendous progress, in accomplishing all issues that led to the imposition of the import ban, by the European Union, on import of fishery products to the European Union.

As the European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, **Karmenu Vella**, said on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2016, ***“Sri Lanka has now a robust legal and policy framework to fight illegal fishing activities”***.

How could Sri Lanka gain these achievements in a shorter span of time?

It is by responding to the situation, positively with a determination and identifying the shortcomings that were later addressed by preparing a Road Map, and implementing same with 57 tasks, over a period of eight months from March 2015.

These tasks covered main thematic areas – such as;

- (i) Legal , Regulatory and Enforcement;
- (ii) Introduction of a deterrent fine system, including administrative fines;
- (iii) Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and Fishery Monitoring Centre (FMC);
- (iv) Boat inspections and observer scheme;
- (v) Computerized Data Management System for data reconciliation and electronic data verification;
- (vi) Capacity building and strengthening operational activities of High seas Fishery Development Unit of DFAR;
- (vii) Training and awareness

In reforming related fishery laws and regulations, Sri Lanka took very bold decisions, and introduced an array of new regulations, covering areas vital for enhancing, Sri Lanka’s regulatory framework as a flag state, coastal state, a port state, and market and business state in high sea fishing activities.

To name a few of them –

- ✓ High Seas Fishing Operations Regulation (governing issuance of licences for high seas fishing activities),
- ✓ Fisheries Data Collection Regulation (making the use and submission of log book mandatory);
- ✓ Fishing Gear Marking Regulation (making fishing gears mandatory);
- ✓ VMS Regulation to comply with the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), and monitoring to be done by the Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC), which were major requirements, in extending SL's capacity, to control and monitor its fishing fleet in high seas;
- ✓ Port State Measures Regulation, through which Sri Lanka maintains a moratorium on foreign landings and transshipments at sea;
- ✓ Regulation on minimum standards for fishermen work under the flag of other countries;
- ✓ Regulation to prevent transferring, selling or exporting fishing vessels to IUU listed countries or operators;
- ✓ Ongoing reforms to introduce, a new Fish and Fishery Products Processing, Import, Export and Re-export Management Regulations and
- ✓ Ongoing reforms to amend, the Foreign Fishing Boats Act to enhance the sanction levels.

**In the areas of monitoring, controlling and surveillance**, deputing more observers to collect scientific data on board during the voyage, monitor movements of vessels at high seas, and monitoring landings of fish both by local and foreign vessels, through increase of inspections, have also been instrumental in creating, a robust policy framework in combating IUU Fishing.

Enhancing the awareness of skippers, fishermen, vessel owners and exporters, officers from all stakeholder agencies, and training more DFAR staff to carry out different tasks, were yet another area of important instruments, worked positively towards Sri Lanka.

All these initiatives helped Sri Lanka to gradually increase its IOTC Compliance ratio, **from 5% in 2009 to in 75% in 2015**, and intend to achieve a level close to 90% at the end of 2016, by continuing with the array of measures listed above.

*[IOTC Compliance ratios were in 2009 (5%), 2010 (18%), 2011 (20%), 2012 (47%), 2013 (51%), 2014 (53%)]*

A lot of work and investment has gone towards building a state of the art fisheries management centre, at the Ministry of Fisheries in Colombo. Together with the placing of VMS on its long line vessels, there is now a suitable legal framework, with deterrent stiff penalties for all illegal activities, which goes up to **SL Rs. 150 million** (US \$ One million), based on the length of the vessel.

With the recent introduction of the Electronic Log Book System, Sri Lanka has been able to establish, a vibrant traceability system, leading up to issuance of catch certificates, the

effectiveness of which could be gauged, when the exports start to commence from Sri Lanka to the European Union very soon.

The progress we have achieved, is not attributable to one individual, but it was due to the untiring commitment and dedication of all stakeholders, especially the political will of the H. E. the President and the Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, who chairs the Cabinet Sub-Committee of Economic Affairs, and the high official level Steering Committee chairs by the Secretary to the Hon Prime Minister, which monitors and directs appropriate decision making and implementation on a regular basis.

As you may know, it was a passage with many challenges and obstacles, which the Fisheries Ministry and the DFAR together, had to face and overcome, for ensuring that we address all the shortcomings, in keeping with Sri Lanka's international and regional obligations, on conservation and management of fishery resources. In this regard, Sri Lanka shares the same goals and aspirations of the international community, including the European Union.

Combating IUU fishing activities, within the EEZ and also in the High Seas, and adopting responsible fishing practices in Sri Lanka, are vital elements in any strategy which aims at, conservation and sustainable management of fishery resources.

Sri Lanka understands this vital aspect, and considers it as a collective responsibility of all Sri Lankans, to ensure, that we manage our scarce fishery resources, in a sustainable way for our future generations.

So, the efforts taken by us are obviously for our benefit, which finally lead to the revoking of the ban. Therefore, I can strongly affirm, that GOSL totally understand its responsibilities, and obligations on the fight against IUU fishing, and to ensure that principles of ocean governance are adhered, by all stakeholders in the government and private sector.

The GOSL also understands that this fight against IUU is not an ending path, but a continuous process, which Sri Lanka will follow tirelessly and endlessly.

It is pertinent to mention, the sincere guidance and advice provided by the European Commission, and particularly the Directorate General of Maritimes Affairs and Fisheries over the past few years, which made us, understand our responsibilities well, towards responsible fishing as an Island nation.

Sri Lankan authorities have accomplished, the key issues and we remain fully confident that the EU ban will be removed, as soon as possible, by the Council of the European Union, once its internal procedures are completed.

Mutually beneficial trading partnership with European Union countries will no doubt bring economic prosperity to fishermen of our country, and much needed foreign exchange earnings to Sri Lanka, and regained its lucrative business, worth more than **120 Million Euros per annum** in the EU market.

This will also send a strong positive message, to the other markets around the world, such as, the US and Japan, that Sri Lanka is not exporting IUU classified fishery products any longer.

The GOSL equally expect that the media around the world would carry this message in their reporting, while highlighting the tangible and positive achievements gained by Sri Lanka, in the sphere of combating IUU fishing, and ensuring the principles of the Ocean Governance.

I thank, all the industry representatives, who have come all the way from Sri Lanka, to witness this event, and the media personnel and buyers present here today.

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