

**Statement delivered by H.E. Mr. C.S. Poolokasingham,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative, in Vienna/Austria
- 13th April 2000**

**Mr. President,
Excellencies, Deputy Secretary General,
Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,**

It gives me great honour to address the Millennium Congress on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka.

At the very outset, allow me to extend to you, Mr. President, Sri Lanka's warmest congratulations on your well deserved election to the Chair of this Historic Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, and we hope under your able guidance this Congress will come to a fruitful conclusion.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express the Government of Sri Lanka's deep appreciation for the Secretariat and for the Bureau of this Congress, for their hard work, which makes the Congress a success. We would also like to express our deep gratitude to all delegates for their commitment, which will make the Vienna Declaration a reality. We hope they would continue with the same wisdom and spirit of consensus to reach the final goal of the congress.

Mr. President,

today we see the dawn of the New Millennium, which transforms the World into a new shape, challenging the institutions of the sovereign States in the field of transnational organised crime such as terrorism, Drug smuggling, Human Traffic, Money Laundering, computer related crimes etc.

Sri Lanka like most other countries in the world has already felt the impact of the problem of transnational organized crimes. What makes the Sri Lanka case unique and complex, is the link between terrorism and transnational crime, which has devastating impact on the lives of innocent men, women and children alike. The democratic policy nurtured by our people for the last 50 years has come under severe stress and strain as a result of these continuing acts of terrorism by groups who believe in the resort of terrorism as a means to an end. Terrorism jeopardizes and undermines the process of seeking political solutions to national issues that are confronting states. As the United Nations has consistently reiterated in many Resolutions and Conventions, including the recent Security Council Resolution 1269, the resort of terror for political purposes in any circumstances is unjustifiable. The task that is before us is to enable the international community to send out a strong, unequivocal message, through the creation of legal norms, that the resort to terrorism against unarmed civilians, for any purposes, is morally repugnant and legally unacceptable.

In this regard we fully endorse the Statements made by the G77 and China and many other delegates requesting for international co-operation to fight against terrorism in all its forms.

Focusing on the issue, the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Hon. Lakshman Kardigamar, in his address to the recently concluded 54th Session of the United Nations General Assembly stated:

"Among the new problems of unparalleled menace and danger that have emerged toward the close of the present century are heightened terrorist activities in many countries and ever proliferating criminal activities in the areas of narcotics, human trafficking and arms smuggling. I have on each occasion that I have come to this podium argued that terrorism must be tackled collectively if it is to be tackled effectively at all."

Mr. President,

It has been our experience in Sri Lanka that recourse is being had by a terrorist group to electronic or wire communication systems or the Internet for international fund raising. Front organizations of this group also engage in similar efforts, ostensibly for humanitarian purposes. Regulatory controls are therefore necessary, recognizing that terrorist groups are now committing "cyber crime" by openly abusing Internet facilities for illegal activities with impunity. The need to prevent such criminality through enhanced international cooperation cannot be over-emphasized. Therefore we would also like to support the suggestions made by many delegations to elaborate on a new international instrument aiming at the prevention and fight against network criminality.

The question of abuse of refugees status by human smugglers is also the issue to be addressed. Serious measures should be taken to protect the rights of the migrants, especially women and children, in line with the provisions of the two protocols under negotiation supplementary to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Crime. Our Government is also in favour of the Global Programme against Trafficking in Human Beings initiated by the Centre for International Crime Prevention and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka also firmly believes economic development and social equality is needed to establish a just and a crime free society. Therefore we would like to emphasize the need of development cooperation and technical assistance to achieve this goal. In this regard we fully endorse the Statement made by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China in this plenary on its first day.

Sri Lanka will continue to extend its unreserved support for the future of the international community to overcome the ardent problem of Transnational Crime and to sustain the future generation their rights to live in a peaceful world.

In this spirit Sri Lanka welcomes all efforts to further develop a collective, comprehensive response by the international community to eliminate transnational crime, while observing and respecting the principles of sovereignty, equal rights and non-intervention.

Thank you.