



# ජාතික විශ්ව විද්‍යාල ආචාර්ය සංගමය தேசிய பல்கலைக்கழக ஆசிரியர் ஒன்றியம் National University Teachers Association

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**"නිවහල් චක්‍ෂේෂන් වටක් උදෙසා විශ්ව විද්‍යාල ආචාර්යවරුන්ගේ දායකත්වය"**

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18<sup>th</sup> May, 2016.

Srimathi Sushma Swaraj,  
Minister of External Affairs,  
Government of India.

Your Excellency.

## **No ETCA Please**

As a group of academics and professionals seriously concerned about some disturbing trends in the public affairs of our country, we consider it appropriate to address you on a matter, which appears to us to be of paramount importance in respect of relations between our two countries.

As Your Excellency is no doubt aware, there is overwhelming opposition rapidly growing in this country to the Economic and Technological Co-operation Agreement, proposed to be signed between Sri Lanka and India. There has never been any previous occasion when feeling of this intensity was manifested by leading professionals representing a wide array of disciplines in Sri Lanka. On 17<sup>th</sup> March, more than sixty unions comprising almost the entire spectrum of professional leadership in all sectors, held a major rally in Colombo to call upon the government not to proceed with the signing of the Framework Agreement, which is currently under discussion.

There is the widespread conviction, supported by compelling evidence, that decisions on this crucial matter are being taken by the Government of Sri Lanka in response to political imperatives rather than on a proper consideration of the economic issues involved. We are convinced, on the basis of objective studies done by Sri Lankan professionals of unimpeachable stature, that this initiative will result in grave harm to our country's vital economic and trade interests.

The reasons for this view are quite apparent. After fifteen years of implementation of the Free Trade Agreement between our countries, a combination of administrative barriers, systematically applied, has prevented our country from making use of its entitlements in terms of the FTA. Import licensing procedures, quantity specifications at a low threshold in respect of Sri Lanka's principal export products, restrictions regarding ports of entry, refusal to accord recognition to Sri Lankan laboratory certification, prolonged quarantine of perishable products and divergent levies imposed by different Indian States, have cumulatively caused deep disillusionment on the Sri Lankan side. We do not, for a moment, consider it a prudent policy from our point of view to expand

the scope of a bilateral agreement from the commodities to the significantly more complex services sector until these issues are resolved in a just and even-handed manner.


We believe that a great deal more preparation by Sri Lanka is required before finality can be brought to the so-called Framework Agreement. There are, clearly, serious issues to be examined in depth regarding, for instance, the implications of the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) which will curtail our capacity to make salutary legislative changes after signing the Framework Agreement, well conceived regulatory systems to be put in place in Sri Lanka before far-reaching steps are taken, and the updating of our legislation, relatively undeveloped, in a variety of fields.

Sri Lanka's weakness in securing an equitable result through discussion is all too obvious. A telling example is our total impotence to prevent, or even to mitigate, what the media has described as "the rape of our seas" by ever increasing numbers of Indian trawlers taking away our valuable marine resources from Sri Lanka's territorial waters, while causing irreversible environmental damage.

We find disquieting the developments now taking place, and are apprehensive that relations between our two countries, already under appreciable strain, are likely to deteriorate further.

We urge you, in the interest of a healthy and understanding relationship between Sri Lanka and India, to ensure that no agreement is signed in the face of vigorous and continuing opposition, persuasively articulated, by the professional community in our country.

Thank you,



Dr. Channa Jayasumana,  
Secretary,  
National University Teachers' Association Sri Lanka

Signatories for the letter,

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