

MEDIA RELEASE

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Media reports on the appointment of Mr Milinda Moragoda as Sri Lanka's Ambassador to India

The Society for Peace Unity and Human Rights for Sri Lanka (SPUR) has provided diaspora leadership to protect Sri Lanka's unitary status, territorial integrity and sovereignty for over 25 years. It has fought many battles against Tamil diaspora led separatism and Muslim extremism, and Western denigration of our beloved Nation and its people. Attempts by the Yahapalana government since 2015 to prosecute valiant armed forces within and external to Sri Lanka in Geneva, undermine nationalistic values, persecution of Buddhists and despicable attempts at fabricating evidence to prosecute President Mahinda Rajapaksa's leadership team including the then Defence Secretary Hon Gotabaya Rajapaksa, were passionately and vigorously resisted and campaigned against.

While respecting the absolute right of the President to appoint people who he sees fit for positions of strategic importance to the Nation, we strongly believe the appointment of a person such as Milinda Moragoda as the Ambassador to India is counterproductive to the National Interest. Whilst we acknowledge the absence of any formal government announcement, we base our position on extensive media reporting of Mr Moragoda's appointment and a reference to ambassadorial appointments made by none other than the Secretary to the Foreign Ministry, Dr Colombage that "best career diplomats should be posted to neighbouring capitals" (Daily Mirror 26 August 2020).

Our request to reconsider the appointment of Mr Milinda Moragoda as ambassador to India is predicated on his past evidence based conduct that he is driven by personal or external interests, and not by Sri Lanka's interests. Evidence referenced include but are not limited to his:

- Bias towards foreign nations detailed in the leaked cable sent by the US Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Ashley Willis in 2003 where he says Moragoda is the 'perfect fit' to promote the interest of USA in Sri Lanka and the region (Wikipedia 2020);
- Ongoing involvement with USA through close association with the Pathfinder Foundation established by Moragoda as recent as late 2017 during Yahapalana regime (Daily FT Nov 2017);
- Willingness to consider setting up an alternative cabal to counter the Non Aligned Movement (NAM). NAM is currently supported by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and is government policy;
- Provision of internal LTTE war related information to foreign powers undermining President Kumaranatunga, whilst being a cabinet minister (Scoop Independent News, Cablegate: Minister Moragoda reviews upcoming visit to Washington in meeting with US ambassador to Sri Lanka);
- Request foreign country representatives to pressure then President Kumaratunga to secure outcomes that are favourable to LTTE parroted by then PM Ranil Wickramasinha (Wiki Leaks);
- Willingness to receive 60 million Norwegian Krona funding (Rs 1,260 million in today's rupees) from Norway to work with Indian NGOs Horizon and Sarvatra (Norad Report 2011);
- Establishment of the China-Sri Lanka Cooperation Studies Centre under the auspices of Pathfinder Foundation to balance bias towards US and Indian interests; and
- Arranging a CIA operative to attend weekly meetings of the intelligence community reported by retired, highly respected DIG Merrill Gunaratne in his 2011 book titled 'Cop in the Crossfire'.

Given above referenced evidence, we humbly request the President and the Foreign Minister Hon Dinesh Gunawardena to reconsider entertaining the appointment of Milinda Moragoda as the High Commissioner to India and select instead, a patriotic and competent career diplomat to this most important position.

Dr DASARATH JAYASURIYA
PRESIDENT SPUR