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வெளிநாட்டு அலுவல்கள் அமைச்சு
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

ජනරජ ගොඩනැගිල්ල, කොළඹ 1, ශ්‍රී ලංකාව குடியரசு கட்டிடம், கொழும்பு 1, இலங்கை Republic Building, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

MEDIA STATEMENT

The attention of the Ministry of Foreign Relations has been drawn to remarks made by Member of Parliament Udaya Gammanpila over media on 3 December 2019 in connection with the reference to Sri Lanka in the election manifesto of the Conservative Party in the run up to the general election in the United Kingdom scheduled for 12 December 2019.

In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Relations wishes to state that a paragraph on page 53 of the Conservative party manifesto which refers to Sri Lanka is worded as follows:

'We will continue to support international initiatives to achieve reconciliation, stability and justice across the world, and in the former conflict zones such as Cyprus, Sri Lanka and the Middle East, where we maintain our support for a two-state solution;'

Following publication of the manifesto, the High Commission of Sri Lanka in the UK in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Relations took immediate steps to make strong representation to the Co-Chair of the Conservative Party The Rt. Hon. James Cleverly with regard to the distortion contained in the manifesto in its reference to Sri Lanka. This was conveyed through letter by Sri Lanka's High Commissioner in the UK Manisha Gunasekera on 27 November 2019 addressed to the Co-Chair of the Conservative party.

The High Commissioner affirmed that the reference to Sri Lanka as a country which requires a two-state solution is unacceptable, and has never been the position of any party in the UK. She reaffirmed that successive British Governments led by all parties have always supported peace and reconciliation in a united Sri Lanka. The High Commissioner therefore requested that the paragraph be suitably amended to accurately reflect the Conservative party position on Sri Lanka. A copy of the letter is annexed herewith for perusal (Annex I)

Subsequent to representation by the High Commissioner through the above submission as well as through outreach to senior representatives of the Conservative party, the Deputy Chair of the Conservative Party Paul Scully issued the following clarification on the subject to the High Commissioner by his email communication of 27 November 2019:

'The party's position regarding Sri Lanka has not changed... To be absolutely clear, the two-state line in the section was intended to refer only to the Israel-Palestine situation in the Middle East (as is stated policy). The commitments to Sri Lanka and Cyprus were simply about continuing existing efforts to support peace and reconciliation in divided societies.'

The above position has also been reiterated by The Rt. Hon. Theresa Villiers, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of the UK through her public post on social media (Facebook) of 30 November where she has further added the following:

'The subsequent reference to a two-state solution refers to the Middle East, NOT to Cyprus or Sri Lanka. I have been in contact with Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, and he has confirmed this.'

Conservative party Deputy Chair Paul Scully has in his twitter message of 3 December 2019 once again reiterated the above position of the Conservative party, stating the following:

'There is no Conservative manifesto commitment relating to the makeup of governance of Sri Lanka. ... two state relate only to Middle East.'

The Ministry of Foreign Relations is of the view that the above would clarify the position of the Conservative party on the issue as well as action taken by the Ministry of Foreign Relations and the High Commission in London to correct the distortion.

Ministry of Foreign Relations
Colombo

04 December 2019