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 வெளிநாட்டு அலுவலகம் அமைச்சு, குடியரசுக் கட்டிடம், கொழும்பு 1. இலங்கை
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, Republic Building, Colombo 1. Sri Lanka.

PRESS RELEASE
SITUATION IN IRAQ

Sri Lanka has consistently urged Iraq to comply fully with the United Nations Security Council resolutions obliging it to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

Until now there has been a lack of full compliance with these resolutions. Therefore, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq has not been completed through peaceful means. Unfortunately, the lack of concurrence in the Security Council on how to proceed with its own Resolution 1441 adopted unanimously has led to the collapse of the UN process.

Sri Lanka is greatly disturbed by the outbreak of this conflict in the Middle East. Sri Lanka is gravely concerned about the massive political, economic, social, and above all, humanitarian consequences that would ensue in the military conflict, affecting Iraq, the Middle East region and indeed international peace and security. We express confidence that the coalition partners would move early to minimize adverse consequences on the civilian population in Iraq and, in association with other members of the international community, coordinate rehabilitation efforts in the country.

Beyond the current issue, the UN must continue to play an undiminished role in other situations of tension such as, in particular, the question of Palestine. There should be substantial progress towards an enduring and just peace in which the States of Palestine and Israel can develop in peace, freedom and mutual trust within secure boundaries in accordance with the Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

The all pervasive evil of terrorism must not at this stage be permitted to exploit and thrive on the global uncertainty and tension which have now been heightened. The international consensus and collective will to eradicate all forms and manifestations of terrorism, wherever and in whatever circumstances it occurs, must not be deflected or blunted. Terrorism should not be identified and stereotyped with any particular religion, nationality or civilization.

Sri Lanka is conscious of the hardships and dangers that this military conflict would pose to millions of migrant workers in the Middle-East region, including to several hundred thousands of our own nationals. Our Missions in the region are working closely with the host governments concerned to ensure the safety and security of Sri Lankans and their well-being in the present volatile situation.

Other ramifications stemming from the instability in the Middle -East extend to Sri Lanka as well. In this context, therefore, the Government has taken necessary steps to coordinate a programme whereby essential food stocks such as rice, flour, sugar, lentils and milk products, supplies of fuel and other necessities could be ensured without interruption and at fair prices for consumers in the country. To this end, the Articles and Services (Maintenance) Bill was passed unanimously today in the Sri Lankan Parliament.

It is tragic in the current dangerous situation that the UN system, in particular the Security Council, has been rendered ineffective, and apparently, even

abandoned due to disagreement among its members. Sri Lanka nevertheless continues to firmly believe that issues affecting international peace and security should be as far as possible identified, considered and resolved through the UN, the primary global institution through which the will of the international community can be legitimately expressed.

Therefore, it is essential that the role of the UN and its credibility and authority be restored and respected. The Government will continue to monitor closely the complex implications of the situation in Iraq. Sri Lanka will also seek to work closely with like-minded countries in the national and collective imperative to keep United Nations alive.

Sri Lanka urges a quick end to this crisis based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and the safety, security and welfare of its people.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Colombo.**

20 March 2003