

THE PRESIDENT'S REPLY
TO THE REMARKS OF THE
NEWLY APPOINTED AMBASSADOR
OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA
BERNARD ANTON GOONETILLEKE
UPON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF
LETTER OF CREDENCE

Mr. Ambassador:

I am pleased to accept your letter of Credence from Her Excellency Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, which establishes you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to acknowledge the Letter of Recall of your distinguished predecessor, Devinda Subasinghe. Thank you for your greetings on behalf of the government and people of Sri Lanka. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Washington.

The United States and Sri Lanka have enjoyed close relations based on common support for the values of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and free trade. We value Sri Lanka's support in the global war on terrorism. Having experienced terrorism and persevered, Sri Lanka understands the threat that terrorism poses to democracy and the world. Sri Lanka has faced great challenges since its independence in 1948, most significantly a separatist conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which uses terrorism to achieve its

political goals. No political objective can justify the use of terror against innocent civilians. A solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka can only be achieved through a negotiated settlement. The United States supports Sri Lanka's peace process and a solution that respects Sri Lanka's unity and sovereignty. The cease-fire signed in 2002 opened the possibility of a peaceful settlement of Sri Lanka's conflict. Unfortunately that process has stalled. The United States urges all parties in Sri Lanka to reengage with the peace process and reach a final settlement.

Sri Lanka had only begun the long road of recovery from decades of warfare and terrorism when it was struck by the tsunami of December 26, 2004. Americans are a caring people, and all Americans were touched by this tragedy. The United States has joined the international community in a commitment to help rebuild after this disaster. I recently signed into law legislation providing funds for this recovery effort. However, beyond the United States Government contribution to reconstruction are contributions from thousands of private Americans.

Sri Lanka over the years has achieved commendable success in quality of life despite terrorism and the challenges of development. If peace is achieved, Sri Lanka has the potential to end poverty and expand economic opportunity. Sri Lanka's highly educated population, if mobilized, could expand trade and create new industries in the technology sector. Completing the task of economic reform has the potential to turn Sri Lanka into a regional trade hub, one that could transform Sri Lanka and provide for all Sri Lankans a secure and prosperous future.

Once again, Mr. Ambassador, I welcome you to Washington,
and I wish you all the best during your time as Ambassador of
the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to the United
States of America.