Highlights of the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Norway
4th quarter of 2019
Dear Friends,

It is with regret I inform you that I am relinquishing my duties and leaving Norway on the 21st December 2019. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to each and every one of you for your invaluable support during my stay here. I wish to thank my colleagues at the Embassy, colleagues at the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland and Iceland, Honorary Consuls, Ambassadors and our community. It has been a pleasure getting to know you and working with you.

During my tenure, I was fortunate to be involved in two high level visits to Norway. That of our former PM, Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Tilak Marapana. Two of Sri Lanka’s Fisheries Ministers also visited Norway during this time period. There were in addition, delegations from Sri Lanka in the areas of ICT, trade, oceans, and mine prevention.

Collaboration is currently underway between the University of Jaffna, University of Peradeniya, Ruhuna University and the University of Tromso, University of South Eastern Norway and Norwegian University of Life Sciences.

I have been in the process of appointing two Honorary Consuls for Sri Lanka in Norway. The paperwork is at the final stages and I hope that this can soon be finalized.

During the year, there have been visits by representatives from the Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine of Sri Lanka, digitalization, ICTA and Chamber of Young Sri Lankan Entrepreneurs (COYLE), to Finland. Discussions are currently underway between EduCluster (Finland) and COYLE (Sri Lanka).

Cooperation with Iceland is mainly in the UNU-Fisheries area, which has been ongoing. I am happy to mention that for the first time, cooperation in the UNU-GEST (gender) programme will commence in 2020. Discussions are also underway to promote tourism between the countries.

The tourism industry was unfortunately adversely affected by the Easter Sunday attacks which took the lives of many and changed the lives of many more. The Embassy coordinated a relief effort with the Community and “Caritas” in sending a container to those affected by the attacks. I wish to thank all of you for the support and solidarity during this time period.

The work I have undertaken would not have been possible without the friendship and assistance of all and unwavering support of our community.

I take this opportunity to bid farewell and to thank you all once again for making this an enjoyable experience for me. It has been a privilege to represent Sri Lanka in the Kingdom of Norway. I hope you will continue to work with my colleagues at the Embassy and my successor. Please keep in touch.

Best Wishes,
Arusha Cooray
Political and Development News

Sri Lanka’s Seventh Executive President H.E. Gotabaya Rajapakse sworn in

The winner of the 2019 Presidential Election, SLPP candidate Gotabaya Rajapaksa sworn in as the 7th Executive President of Sri Lanka in Anuradhapura on 18.11.2019.

Hon. Mahinda Rajapaksa MP was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

Former President and the leader of Sri Lanka Podu Jana Peramuna Mahinda Rajapaksa was sworn in as new Prime Minister of Sri Lanka before President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on 21 November 2019. The newly elected Prime Minister Rajapaksa was first elected to the Parliament in 1970 and served as Prime Minister from 6 April 2004 until his victory in the 2005 presidential election. He was sworn in for his first six-year term as president on 19 November 2005. He was re-elected for a second term on 27 January 2010.
Sri Lanka Participation at “Our Ocean 2019” Conference

The sixth “Our Ocean” conference was held in Oslo from 23-24 October 2019. In attendance from Sri Lanka, Ms Bimba Tillekeratne, President Counsel and Senior Legal Advisor to the Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Ms. Hasanthi Dissanayake, Director General of Ocean Affairs, Environment and Climate Change Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka’s Ambassador to Norway, H.E. Arusha Cooray, and Second Secretary Ms. Samanmali Atalugama.

The theme for the conference was learning, sharing and acting. The conference was attended by leaders from 100 countries and 100 youth delegates from over 60 countries. Governments, business, organizations, universities, NGOs and research institutions were represented. A number of commitments were made in the areas of climate change, sustainable fisheries, marine pollution, maritime protected areas, sustainable blue economy and maritime security. Issues raised at the conference covered the sustainable use of oceans, preserving livelihoods, reducing emissions, research and innovation, sustainable technologies, transparency in ocean data sharing among others. Two Meetings were also held on the side-lines with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway and the Ministry of Fisheries and Trade of Norway.
“Thisarana” Appreciates the dedicated service of the Ambassador Arusha Cooray

Ambassador Arusha Cooray was presented with a plaque by community group ‘Thisarana’ for the services rendered to the Sri Lanka community in Norway. Members of the Thisarana Sri Lanka community gathered at the Oslo Buddhist Vihara and appreciated the dedication and the commitment of the Ambassador during her tenure in Norway.

Bishop Kari Veiteberg and the delegation evaluate the situation in Sri Lanka after the visit

Bishop Kari Veiteberg invited those who participated in the trip to Sri Lanka in August this year for an informal lunch on Wednesday 11 December 2019 at 11.30-13.00 in Oslo bispegård. They discussed the situation in Sri Lanka after the visit. Ambassador Arusha Cooray was invited for the event.
Visit of Ambassador to Tromsø, Norway

The Ambassador, Arusha Cooray, visited Tromsø and met with the Dean of the Norwegian College of Fishery Science and Professor Jorge Santos, University of Tromsø. She discussed the exchange programme between the University of Tromsø, University of Jaffna and University of Ruhuna with Professor Santos and met with the students involved in the exchange programme. The Ambassador also had the opportunity of visiting a newly opened café, Kafe Globus, by a member of the community, Mr. Velautham, where she met members of the community living in Tromsø.
Official Visit of Ambassador to Finland

Ambassador Arusha Cooray was invited by the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) to chair and moderate the launch of a new book, “Resurgent Asia,” by Professor Deepak Nayyar. Welcome addresses were given by the Director of UNU-WIDER, Professor Kunal Sen, and Under-Secretary of State, External Economic Relations MFA, Ms. Nina Vaskunlahti. Discussants of the book were Dr. Mikael Mattlin of the University of Turku and Dr. Juuso Kaaresvirta of the Bank of Finland. Mr. Harri Kämäräinen, Finland’s Ambassador for South Asia, Ms. Sini Paukkunen, Director Unit for Policy Planning and Research MoFA, among many others were present. The event was held at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in partnership with their Unit for Policy Planning and Research.

Ambassador Arusha Cooray met with the Ambassador of Bangladesh based in Stockholm

The Ambassador for Bangladesh H.E. Md. Nazmul Islam based in Stockholm, visited the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Oslo together with Honorary Consul General Mr. Sahidur Rahman and Second Secretary, Md. Marshedur Rahman Talukder and met with Ambassador for Sri Lanka, Arusha Cooray and Second Secretary, Samanmali Atalugama. Topics discussed included, trade and investment in the two countries and between Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Norway.
Mine Ban Convention held in Oslo, November 2019

The Fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention was held in Oslo on 25-29 November 2019. More than 600 representatives from state parties, observer countries and civil society were present at the conference.

The delegation from Sri Lanka comprised Ambassador/Permanent Representative & Consul General of the Permanent Mission in Geneva, Mr. A.L.A. Azeez, Ambassador to Norway Mrs. Arusha Cooray, Second Secretary Mrs. Samanmali Atalugama and Deputy Director National Mine Action Centre, Mrs. Jeladeepan. A general statement and statement under International Cooperation and Assistance were delivered by Ambassador Azeez and one under Gender by Mrs Jeladeepan. Ambassador Azeez and Mrs Jeladeepan congratulated the President of the Mine Ban Treaty and Norway for the effective leadership given to the review process. Ambassador Azeez stated that through sustained national efforts at mine risk education, Sri Lanka had succeeded in bringing civilian casualties of landmines to zero by 2018 and was next in line to achieving mine-free status. The delegation also visited PRIO and met with Professor Henrik Urdal.
Tourism News

Sri Lanka Embassy-LOT Polish Airlines Celebrate the Commencement of LOTs flights to Colombo in November 2019

The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Oslo, together with LOT Polish Airlines, celebrated the commencement of LOT’s direct flight from Warsaw to Colombo. LOT will fly seasonally, three times a week, from November to March by modern Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner.
The event was attended by diplomats, corporate partners, members of the travel industry and social influencers from the two countries. The Ambassador for Sri Lanka, H.E. Arusha Cooray, mentioned that this reinforced the strong and enduring relationship, between Sri Lanka and Poland, which spanned over 60 years. She went onto say that the introduction of this direct route was expected to increase the flow of tourists and business passengers, and strengthen economic cooperation including trade, investment, finance, educational and cultural linkages, between Sri Lanka and Poland.

The Ambassador for Poland, H.E. Iwona Woicka-Zulowska stated that the launch of this flight would lead to an increased flow of tourists to Sri Lanka from Poland and hoped that it would lead to an increased flow of passengers from Sri Lanka to Poland as well. Sales Manager for PLOT, Mr Gonen Butel, gave a presentation highlighting the advantages of LOT, the direct route, and flights from Oslo to Colombo on this route. The evening featured a Sri Lankan cultural performance and Sri Lankan cuisine to give people a taste of Sri Lanka.
Sri Lanka Participation at the Diplomatic Food Bazaar

The Embassy of Sri Lanka participated at a food bazaar organized by the Female Ambassadors in Oslo together with the International Forum on 3rd December. Food was showcased by a number of embassies and attracted a large number of people from Oslo. A music group from Hungary performed at the event. All proceeds from the event will go to “Water for Life” (Vann for Livet), a Red Cross project that provides clean drinking water in regions struggling with acute water scarcity.
Cultural News

Annual Katina Ceremony at the Oslo Buddhist Vihara

The annual “Katina Pinkama” of the Oslo Buddhist Vihara was held on Saturday, October 19, 2019. Ven. Marathugoda Manirathana Thero and Ven. Unapana Pemananda Thero together with other Buddhist monks in attendance, performed religious observances.

A Pirith ceremony on the 18th October was followed by dhamma sermons and an alms-giving on the 19th October. Ambassador Arusha Cooray and staff of the Embassy of Sri Lanka and Norwegian Sri Lankans of Buddhist faith attended the ceremony.

(Photography by Mr. Chamara Weerasinghe)
Ordination of Deacon Franklyn Fernando

Bishop Bernt Eidsvig, Catholic Bishop of Oslo, ordained Franklyn Fernando a Deacon on 30th of November 2019, in parish of Father Bharath, St. Johannes Church, Rødvet. This was the first time a Sri Lankan was ordained as deacon in Norway. The Ambassador and staff of the Embassy attended the ceremony.
Consular News

The Official Website of Sri Lanka ETA Visa

The issuing authority of the Sri Lankan ETA visa is Department of Immigration & Emigration and the link for the website is www.immigration.gov.lk

The travellers should be strongly advised to use only the Official Government ETA website www.eta.gov.lk and to be cautious of other sites that appear legitimate. Travelers flying to Sri Lanka should be aware of the following unauthorized Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) websites that scam them into pay exorbitant fees.

https://www.eta.org.lk
https://www.srilankavisa.org.lk/
https://www.e-visa.lk/
https://www.srilankavisa.lk
https://www.go-sri-lanka.com
https://www.srilanka-visaonline.com
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