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### **Statement by Mr. Jan Petersen, Foreign Minister of Norway: Announcement of Sri Lanka ceasefire**

22 February 2002

As from 00:00 hours on 23 February 2002, a ceasefire agreement enters into force between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE). The ceasefire document, signed by Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and LTTE leader Vellipulai Prabhakaran, has been deposited with the Norwegian Government, and we have been asked to make the agreement public.

The overall objective of the parties is to find a negotiated solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, which has cost 60,000 lives and caused widespread human suffering. The ceasefire will pave the way for further steps towards negotiations.

Through this formalized ceasefire the parties commit themselves to putting an end to the hostilities. They commit themselves to restoring normalcy for all the inhabitants of Sri Lanka, whether they are Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims or others. And they commit themselves to accepting an international monitoring mission, led by Norway, which will conduct on-site monitoring.

Both sides have taken bold steps to conclude the ceasefire, and this agreement is a message that they are prepared to continue taking bold steps to achieve peace. They are embarking on a long road towards a political solution. It will not be easy. It will require determination and courage. The parties will face risks and uncertainties, and they will have to make hard choices. But no hardships are worse than those of conflict and bloodshed. No gains are greater than those of peace and prosperity.

On the journey to peace and prosperity, the inhabitants of Sri Lanka, and their leaders, will need the solidarity of the international community. It must mobilize political and financial support for peace and reconciliation. Norway will continue to accompany the parties in this demanding process.

I shall now provide some more detail about the ceasefire agreement.

First, it outlines the modalities of the ceasefire, including the total cessation of all offensive military operations, the separation of forces, and increased freedom of movement for unarmed troops on both sides.

Second, measures to restore normalcy for all the inhabitants of Sri Lanka - Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and others - putting an end to hostile acts against civilians, allowing the unimpeded flow of non-military goods, opening roads and railway lines, and a gradual easing of fishing restrictions.

Third, a small international monitoring mission, led by Norway. The mission will conduct international on-site monitoring of the fulfilment of the commitments made by the Parties. Let me underline, however, that it is up to the parties to respect the agreement and to impose sanctions on those individuals on either side who act contrary to the agreement.

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