

**Remarks by Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Representative of the Government of  
Japan at the Washington Seminar on Sri Lanka, 14 April 2003**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the U.S. Government for hosting this seminar preparatory to the major donors' conference which Japan will be hosting on 9-10 June this year. I am particularly happy that the seminar is chaired by Deputy Secretary of State Mr. Richard Armitage, whose CSIS speech on 14 February has so clearly delineated both opportunities and remaining challenges on the way to genuine peace in Sri Lanka.

There are immense opportunities today, and we, particularly the parties in conflict themselves, will be harshly judged by history if we do not take full advantage of the positive momentum which has been generated now. While remaining tasks are still numerous, I feel, as a witness to the latest peace negotiations held at Hakone, Japan, last month, that negotiators on both sides are open, serious and focused in exploring all possible avenues for agreement, under the superb and impartial facilitation role played by Norway.

We wish them all success. We are of the view that the best way for us to support and encourage the on-going negotiations to a prompt and satisfactory conclusion is for all of us to join together to mobilize needed humanitarian assistance as well as medium to longer term resources not only to rebuild the North and East of Sri Lanka which has been devastated by the war, but also to help self-sustained development of the entire country, always mindful of the delicate ethnic and geographical balance. Japan has borne a significant part of external assistance in the past, and is now ready to fulfill its share of the major responsibility in the delicate transition from war to peace. We are delighted that the U.S., Norway and the European Union have agreed to co-chair the Tokyo Conference in June with us, which I hope will send a resounding message that a prolonged ethnic conflict characterized by a cycle of hatred, terror and destruction must be put to an end once and forever through a persistent and sustained negotiation by the parties themselves. Their efforts have to be accompanied by needed international support.

I acknowledge, with gratitude, the thorough needs assessment being undertaken by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and UNDP with the cooperation of the government of Sri Lanka and LTTE, and am convinced that it will serve as a sound basis for generous pledges to be made in Tokyo in June.

I do not think that I need to remind the parties that it is they who bear the main burden of reconstructing their war-torn country and make necessary endeavors to make further progress in negotiations. It is natural that the donor community would want to monitor the negotiating process closely in order to ensure that the cease-fire is observed, human rights are complied with, democratic practice is broadened, appropriate federal system is introduced, and the implementation of the pledges by the donor community in the Tokyo Conference will be linked to the progress of the peace process. Donors are also mindful that their assistance will be effectively and efficiently utilized, and are prepared to assist the capacity building of both parties so as to ensure smooth implementation of their assistance.

As for Japan, we feel privileged to confirm and even strengthen our traditional friendship with the people of Sri Lanka. Our commitment to peace in Sri Lanka and a better life for its people stem not only from Japan's traditional kinship with Sri Lanka but also from its forward-looking new approach to the building of a more peaceful world by making a tangible contribution to the consolidation of peace in areas beset by uncertainties and conflicts. I look forward to working with all of you here present to create an environment most conducive to a real peace and development in Sri Lanka.