

In taking over the Chair, I commit to continuing to further strengthen the voice of our Group on the international stage. I have every confidence that in this task, Sri Lanka would receive the fullest co-operation and support of all Members of the Group, stated President Mahinda Rajapaksa accepting the Chairmanship of G 15.

The strong unity this Group has always projected, complemented by its rich diversity, will go a long way towards contributing to the achievement of its objectives, he said.

President Rajapaksa added, 'combating poverty, overcoming hunger, universal access to education and health and ensuring sound standards of living for our people have and will continue to be, the highest priorities for all of us'.

President also said that G 15 has an environment conducive to taking the Group forward and re-vitalizing its role, despite successive crises in the food, energy and financial sectors.

Sri Lanka will host the 15th G15 Summit in 2011.

Following is the text of the acceptance speech:

Sri Lanka is pleased to accept the role of Chair of the G-15 in succession to the Islamic Republic of Iran. We look forward to hosting the Group's next Summit in 2011.

I wish to congratulate His Excellency Dr Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for his guidance and sterling leadership of this Group over the past years. Your dedication, Excellency, to the further strengthening and advancement of the G15 has ensured its continuity in the noble tradition for which it was founded, namely of enhancing South-South cooperation.

Excellencies,

We are meeting at a crucial time, both for our Group and for developing countries in the global environment. Successive crises in the food, energy and financial sectors have shaken to their core, long-established norms and foundations.

At the same time, I believe that we however have an environment conducive to taking our

Group forward and re-vitalizing its role. We have indeed come a full circle. The birth of our Group was at a time of hange in the international economic and political order. Our completion of 20 years has arrived when the very foundations of this order are again shifting. An environment marked with challenges, provides a pring-board to forge ahead.

Our priorities are many. Though the crises may appear behind us, recovery is still faint. Environmental disasters across the world, have reinforced the need for collective global action on climate change. At the same time, there remain the long-standing development challenges which need urgent redress.

Combating poverty, overcoming hunger, universal access to education and health and ensuring sound standards of living for our people have and will continue to be, the highest priorities for all of us.

Excellencies,

I must be honest. I do not believe that the Group can or should provide a prescription to address all of these issues. Nevertheless, the strong unity this Group has always projected, complemented by its rich diversity, will go a long way towards contributing to the achievement of its objectives. In taking over the Chair, I commit to continuing to further strengthen the voice of our Group on the international stage. I have every confidence that in this task, Sri Lanka would receive the fullest co-operation and support of all Members of the Group.