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வெளிவிவகார அமைச்சு

### MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

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Date } 24.01.2011.

### STATEMENT ALLEGED INCIDENTS INVOLVING INDIAN FISHERMEN

The Ministry of External Affairs wishes to refer to two incidents alleged to have taken place in the waters between Sri Lanka and India on or around the 12<sup>th</sup> of January and the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January respectively, resulting in the loss of life of two fishermen.

The Ministry wishes to reiterate in this regard that it is the consistent policy of Sri Lanka to treat in a humanitarian manner all fishermen, including those from the Indian fishing community, who cross into Sri Lanka waters. In keeping with this policy, the Sri Lanka Navy has within the last 12 months afforded assistance to 32 Indian fishermen and 10 Indian fishing vessels. The Annexure to this Statement provides further details of the assistance that has been thus rendered.

As soon as reports of the alleged incidents began to appear, the Sri Lanka Navy was instructed by the Ministry of Defence to carry out its own inquiry. The Navy has the facility of keeping track of the precise location of any of its vessels at any given time, especially when they happen to be deployed in the waters in between India and Sri Lanka. It is this same facility that the Sri Lanka Navy also uses to share information with the Indian authorities on the incursions across the International Maritime Boundary Line by Indian fishing vessels, including the marks and identified numbers of such vessels. Based on the data recorded by these facilities, it is clear that there were no Sri Lanka Navy vessels in the vicinity of the locations, where the incidents are alleged to have occurred.

At the same time, Sri Lanka assigns the highest priority to her very close bilateral relationship with India. Therefore, any development which impacts on the well-being of the Indian fishing community pursuing their livelihoods in the waters in between the two countries, is of the utmost concern to Sri Lanka. The Government of Sri Lanka is accordingly most anxious to ascertain the facts behind the alleged incidents, so that any perpetrators are brought to account. For this purpose, the Government of Sri Lanka has requested from the Indian authorities through diplomatic channels, the fullest possible information. The Ministry of External Affairs wishes to emphasize that as and when this information is made available, further investigations based on the additional data that may be provided, would be conducted.

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