PRESS RELEASE

SAARC CCI Conference on Trade Facilitation in South Asia
NTBs deter intra- SAARC Trade: G.L. Peiris

P R (Islamabad)- “Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) deter intra-SAARC Trade and need to be addressed through modern technology, positive approach and shared vision” this was stated by Professor G.L. Peiris, Minister for external Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka in his inaugural address at the Seminar “Trade Facilitation in South Asia: Addressing barriers to foster Trade Chain” recently concluded in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The seminar was organized by SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Sri Lanka in partnership with Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF): Fur Die Freiheit, Regional Directorate, New Delhi. The seminar was also addressed by Professor Madhukar Rana, former Finance Minister of Nepal, South Asian Business Leaders including Vikramjit Singh Sahney, President, SAARC CCI, Kumar Mallimaratchi, President National Chamber of Sri Lanka, Vice Presidents of SAARC CCI Mr. Mahendra Parmar (India), Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik (Pakistan), Mr. Kosala Wikramanayake(Sri Lanka) and Mr. Subodh Kumar, Senior Program Executive, FNF in presence of Mr. Jayarathin Herath, Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Sri Lanka, Mr. Annisul Huq, Immediate Past President (Bangladesh) and Mr. Tariq Sayeed, founder Member and former President of SAARC CCI (Pakistan). Muhammad Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General, SAARC CCI moderated the seminar.

Sri Lankan External Minister termed NTBs as root-cause of insignificant intra-regional Trade, which was poorly 5% as compared with 58% in EU, 52% in NAFTA and 26% in ASEAN. He urged for strengthening bilateral and sub-regional initiatives within the regional trade framework to foster regional cooperation.

Mr. Vikramjit Singh Sahney in his keynote address urged for reduction of sensitive list, minimizing procedural barriers to ensure the free flow of goods and services and promote trade, investment and Tourism to further deepen Regional Economic Cooperation.

Mr. Annisul Huq reiterated the demand of flexible Visa Policy, implementation of motor vehicle agreement, shipping protocol, and EDI facilities at Border Customs.

Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik asserted the need for adoption of modern approached and change in mindset of the political leaders and Government officials, requesting the change in their role from regulators to facilitators.

In addition to inaugural, technical sessions on procedural barriers and logistic issues were addressed by academicians and experts like Dr. Prabir De, Fellow-RIS, India, Ms. Ashani, research officer IPS ( Sri Lanka), Government officials of Sri Lanka, Ms. Rita O’ Sullivan Country Director, ADB, experts and professional from South Asian region.

(Muhammad Iqbal Tabish)
Secretary General