

Brief statement by H.E Ravinatha Aryasinha at the signing ceremony of the “Declaration of Intent to Collaborate” between the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and The Group of Fifteen (G-15)

21st February, 2017

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply pleased to witness and be part of this historic moment that marks the formalisation of cooperation between the Group of Fifteen and CERN. This is the beginning of a new era of opportunities for developing countries to collaborate with this world renowned scientific institution of excellence. I recall the very constructive engagement the G-15 ambassadors had with the CERN on 16th August, last year which set the foundation to strengthen interactions between our two organisations. Several of our member countries are already active collaborators with CERN through bilateral agreements. In addition the ‘Declaration of Intent to Collaborate’ signed today will collectively benefit all our members through the many opportunities provided by CERN to enhance scientific capacities in our countries while it will also provide our member countries that are yet to harness the true potential of CERN, an important platform to launch their own collaborations within the bilateral sphere.

In recent years the G-15 has decided to constructively engage international organisations, particularly those based in Geneva. These engagements are not limited to policy spheres or to the UN agencies

while we have made significant strides in these areas. We have actively sought opportunities of cooperation and capacity enrichment through interactions with think tanks such as the South Centre and training institutions such as UNITAR. The formal agreements that were signed last year with the South Centre and the UNITAR have already yielded several practical and tangible benefits to our countries. For example we had an excellent interaction with the South Centre on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda two weeks ago and UNITAR continues to provide our Group with many scholarships for their training programmes. I am glad that CERN has now become such a partner organisation with the G-15 as we seek to enhance capacity building, South-South cooperation and technical assistance within our Group.

Tangible benefits that we foresee from this agreement are the student and teacher training programmes offered by CERN to developing countries. Such programmes have the capacity to revolutionise the science and technology fields in our countries. The exposure to world class research facilities such as CERN can have long term benefits to individuals and to the greater scientific communities in our countries. For the participants of such programmes these would be career defining moments in their lives while the benefits of their experiences will also permeate to the greater scientific communities back home.

I am deeply grateful that CERN has already pledged to accommodate up to 40 participants from G-15 countries for a summer teacher training programme. On behalf of all our members I would like to

kindly request that CERN consider the possibility of fully sponsoring one or maybe even two participants from each of our countries for this programme. Such a gesture would not only be deeply appreciated but would ensure the active participation of all our countries and also demonstrate the real value of today's agreement. I look forward to a brief discussion on this programme after the signing of documents.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to thank a few individuals for making today's event a reality. Prof. Emmanuel Tsesmelis, the Head of Relations with Associate Members and Non-Member States of CERN is our main point of contact in this endeavour. He has been a tremendous source of strength as we progressed from an idea of cooperation to signing of this agreement within a short span of less than one year. Ms. Charlotte Lindberg Warakaulle, the Director for International Relations and Dr. Rudiger Voss the Head of International Relations till recently are great friends of Sri Lanka and also champions of cooperation between the G-15 and CERN. I thank the legal division of CERN which looked into the formalities of this agreement and all others who assisted in their own capacities.

In conclusion, I wish to state that I am certain that this agreement signed today would be a catalyst for scientific advancement in all our countries. Let us utilise this opportunity to the fullest and strive for further collaboration and cooperation with CERN for the mutual benefit of all.

Thank you!