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Dear Mr Cagirici

Thank you for your email on 4 July regarding the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) which will be held in Sri Lanka in November. I am replying to your email as a Desk Officer in the Commonwealth Team in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The British Government believes that the best way to achieve lasting and equitable peace in Sri Lanka is through an inclusive political solution that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict and takes into account the legitimate grievances and aspirations of all Sri Lanka's communities. We have consistently called for an independent, thorough and credible investigation into allegations of violations and abuses of international humanitarian and human rights law by both sides in the military conflict.

We continue to have serious concerns about reconciliation and accountability processes, as well as respect for human rights in Sri Lanka, including freedom of expression and judicial independence. During Mr Burt's visit to Sri Lanka earlier this year, he took our human rights concerns directly to the Sri Lankan Government, and urged the full implementation of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission's (LLRC) report recommendations and wider measures on accountability. Both during Mr Burt's visit and since, the British Government has been clear that although some progress has been made, much more work is needed to deliver the path to reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

In light of our concerns, the UK co-sponsored the Sri Lanka resolution which was passed in the Human Rights Council on 21 March, and we welcome its adoption with the support of a majority of Council members. We urge the Sri Lankan Government to implement the recommendations contained in the resolution and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

The British Government is strongly committed to strengthening our engagement with, and role within, the Commonwealth. It is because of the importance we attach to the organisation that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have decided to attend this year's CHOGM. We believe that CHOGM will either highlight progress and respect for Commonwealth values in Sri Lanka, or draw attention to the absence of such progress. It is right that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary should be able to deliver strong messages while in Sri Lanka, and take the opportunity to promote human rights and good governance.

Prince Charles is representing Her Majesty The Queen at CHOGM in her capacity as Head of the Commonwealth, not in her role as Head of State of the UK and realms.

Together with international partners, we will continue to work to support the Sri Lankan people in their pursuit of enduring peace and reconciliation. We will use all opportunities, including CHOGM, to raise human rights concerns with the Sri Lankan Government and urge them to uphold Commonwealth values.

Yours Faithfully

Ben Cross

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