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TOKYO CO-CHAIRS CALL UPON LTTE: Ensure freedom of movement for civilians

A conference of representatives of the Tokyo-Co-Chairs (US, EU, Norway and Japan) was convened yesterday on the initiative of the United States. State Department to discuss the humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka.

South and Central Asian Affairs Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher participated representing the United States. The Co-Chairs called upon the LTTE to permit freedom of movement for civilians. A press release issued by the US Embassy in Colombo yesterday said:

"Co-Chair members expressed urgent concern for the safety of more than 100,000 people trapped by the conflict between Government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in a narrow strip of land in northern Sri Lanka.

They call on the Tigers to permit freedom of movement for the civilians in the area. They discussed the need for the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE to respect the 'No Fire Zone' and protect the civilians trapped there. They reaffirmed the need to stop shelling into the 'No Fire Zone' to prevent further civilian casualties. They stressed the importance of a humanitarian pause and of ensuring that adequate supplies of food, water and medicine reach the civilians in the zone. Assistant Secretary Boucher and the other Co-Chair representatives discussed how to best end the futile fighting without further bloodshed."

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