



For Immediate Release:

The Mosaic Institute Welcomes Mr. Greg Giokas, Director of South Asian Relations, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Toronto – May 4, 2010

Last night, the Mosaic Institute welcomed Mr. Greg Giokas, the Director of South Asian Relations with Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Mr. Giokas flew in from Ottawa to hold discussions with the Planning Committee of Mosaic's "Canadian Young People's Peace Dialogue on Sri Lanka" regarding Canada's relations with the island nation.

Sri Lanka's violent civil war came to an end in May 2009, but the challenges in Sri Lanka remain complex as Canada seeks to determine the best course of action for helping the people of Sri Lanka to rebuild their country and strengthen their democracy. The young Canadians of Tamil and Sinhalese descent who serve on the peace dialogue's Planning Committee felt extremely fortunate to have Mr. Giokas in their midst to share his knowledge and perspectives on the situation.

Mr. Giokas stressed that Canada and Sri Lanka have had positive relations in the past and indicated that Canada is trying to build towards a constructive and mutually-beneficial relationship in the future. He expressed concern about the current situation in Sri Lanka, however, and indicated that much has still to be done to improve the humanitarian, institutional and economic conditions within the country.

Expressing his pleasure at seeing young Canadians of different ethnicities willing to enter into constructive dialogue about Sri Lanka, Mr. Giokas stressed that such dialogues and greater diaspora engagement in strengthening the democratic institutions within Sri Lanka are essential to ensuring that a just and lasting peace emerges. At the same time, he acknowledged the challenge of overcoming the indifference about Sri Lanka on the part of some Canadians who may not realize how the fate of Sri Lanka is relevant to them. Helping Canadians to appreciate their collective interests with respect to Sri Lanka is essential, and more grassroots dialogues like the one being developed by the Mosaic Institute are an important part of that effort.

The "Canadian Young People's Peace Dialogue on Sri Lanka" is part of the broader "South Asian-Canadian Global Citizenship Project" that is being launched by the Mosaic Institute this year through the generous support of Multiculturalism Canada and the RBC Foundation. The project will bring together Canadian young people of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Tamil and Sinhalese origins to discuss the mutually-reinforcing relationship between their Canadian citizenship and the responsibilities of global citizenship.

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