

**Receptie naar aanleiding van de Nationale Feestdag van Sri Lanka**  
**Residentie van de Ambassadeur van Sri Lanka - Woensdag 5 februari 2020**

Op woensdag 5 februari 2020 namen Senator Alessia Claes, voorzitter van de sectie Sri Lanka van de Belgische groep van de IPU, en Senator Andries Gryffroy, voorzitter van de Belgische groep van de IPU, deel aan de receptie naar aanleiding van de Nationale Feestdag van Sri Lanka.

Senator Claes kreeg de eer om de olielamp aan te steken en nam het woord als eregast van dit evenement (zie toespraak hieronder). De receptie werd opgevolgd door traditionele Sri Lankaanse muziek en dans.



Van links naar rechts, Mw. Paola Pampaloni, Deputy Managing Director of Asia and the Pacific Division of the European External Action Service (EEAS), Senator Alessia Claes, H.E. Mw. Grace Asirwatham en Mw. Madhuka Silva, Ambassaderaad (Copyright : Embassy of Sri Lanka)

*“Your excellency Ambassador Asirwatham,  
Honored guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*It is a particular pleasure for me, as chair of the Belgium-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship Group, to be able to speak to you on the occasion of the 72<sup>nd</sup> National Day of Sri Lanka. I would like to express my gratitude to Her Excellency Ambassador Asirwatham for her kind invitation.*

*As newly appointed chair of the Parliamentary Friendship Group, I hope this will be the beginning of a good and productive cooperation between our two countries for the years to come.*

*As the gem of the Indian Ocean, and its strategic position in it, on shipping routes that make up the crossroads for ships coming and going from and to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, China and the Far East, Sri Lanka and*

*Belgium, especially Flanders, have always had a trading partnership. More than 90% of the trade between our two countries happens between Sri Lanka and the Flemish region. Some of our finest Flemish companies, such as Agfa Gevaert, Janssen Pharmaceutica, Reynaers Aluminium and many others, have found a home in Sri Lanka.*



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*Sri Lanka is one of the fastest growing economies in South Asia, and our two nations are both founding members of the World Trade Organization. Therefore, trade between our two countries is of the utmost importance. In matters of trade, there is a large number of opportunities between Sri Lanka and Belgium/Flanders. As a result, I would like to advocate for a cross-pollination between our two countries in sectors such as infrastructure, energy, health care, urban planning, waste processing, tourism and education. A more trade-friendly environment, with regulations that are more flexible, will give both Belgian/Flemish and Sri Lankan companies more opportunities to do business with each other.*

*But for now, I would like to raise the glass to Sri Lanka, its National Day and to the profound cooperation between our two countries in the years to come. I wish you all a pleasant evening. “*

