

Joint Statement

Fourth Session of the Sri Lanka – United States Partnership Dialogue

The following statement is released by the Governments of Sri Lanka and the United States of America on the occasion of the Fourth Sri Lanka – U.S. Partnership Dialogue held on 23 March, 2022 in Colombo.

Begin Text:

Sri Lanka and the United States convened the Fourth Sri Lanka – U.S. Partnership Dialogue on 23 March, 2022, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, renewing their shared commitment to economic prosperity, sustainable development, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The meeting was co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka Prof. G.L. Peiris and the Under Secretary for Political Affairs of the U.S. Department of State Victoria Nuland.

Both delegations reaffirmed their commitment to the bilateral relationship, firmly rooted in shared values as fellow democracies, and their intent to work together to further strengthen the partnership.

Sri Lanka expressed its deep appreciation to the United States for the donation, in partnership with COVAX, of 3.4 million vaccines, and the provision of over \$18 million in health equipment and other relief to address the COVID-19 pandemic in the past year.

Acknowledging that the U.S. is already the largest market for Sri Lankan exports, both delegations reiterated their intent to explore new opportunities to enhance market access, bilateral trade, investment, and tourism. The United States expressed its commitment to enhancing opportunities for the economic empowerment of women. To that end, Sri Lanka welcomed the role of the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), which has increased its portfolio to \$265 million in loans designed to support Sri Lanka's small and medium enterprises, particularly women-owned businesses. Sri Lanka also appreciated the provision of U.S. funding to launch the first business accelerator in Sri Lanka, specifically aimed at women entrepreneurs.

Both countries committed to working together to address climate change and other environmental challenges. The United States welcomed Sri Lanka's goal to produce 70 percent of electricity from renewable energy by 2030, and to attain carbon neutrality by 2050. Ongoing U.S. grant assistance to help meet these goals, including a five-year \$19 million Sri Lanka Energy Program and support towards a floating solar plant, were noted with appreciation.

The United States informed its intent to continue supporting the sustainable development of Sri Lanka through the U.S. Agency for International Development. The U.S. delegation reaffirmed its commitment to promote school nutrition and literacy among Sri Lankan children, in consultation with the Sri Lankan Government. Sri Lanka appreciated the successful nutrition campaign conducted by Save the Children in 2021 which benefited over 106,000 primary grade students.

Sri Lanka and the United States resolved to continue cooperation on maritime security and work together to ensure a safe maritime domain in the Indian Ocean through the rules-based international order. In this context, the U.S. strategy towards a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, which promotes freedom of navigation and overflight, was noted as an important initiative. Sri Lanka welcomed the impending arrival of the third High Endurance U.S. Coast Guard Cutter transferred through the U.S. Excess Defense Articles program. The United States noted the recently announced King Air program to strengthen Sri Lanka's maritime monitoring capacity and respond to humanitarian and post-disaster needs. Sri Lanka welcomed U.S. support in the prevention of smuggling and other illegal activities.

Both delegations welcomed ongoing bilateral defense and security sector cooperation, including U.S. support for humanitarian demining and disaster relief, joint military engagements, human rights training for Sri Lankan officers, and exchange of visits, including by U.S. ships and military officials. The United States resolved to explore opportunities to further expand counter-terrorism cooperation with Sri Lanka.

The United States welcomed action taken by Sri Lanka to promote reconciliation and human rights in pursuit of development and prosperity. Sri Lanka outlined its progress in reconciliation, in promoting and protecting human rights, and in strengthening democracy, democratic institutions and practices, good governance, justice and the rule of law. The United States acknowledged progress in these areas, including efforts to reform the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), the release of long-term PTA detainees, the justice reform agenda, and engagement with civil society representatives. The United States encouraged Sri Lanka to continue making progress on its commitments to reconciliation and human rights.

Both delegations expressed strong support for ongoing cooperation between the two countries in education and culture. The United States emphasized the value of educational exchanges, highlighting the 70th anniversary of the U.S.-Sri Lanka Fulbright Program and its contribution to Sri Lanka's development. The United States expressed interest in working together to further expand opportunities for university partnerships and overseas study for Sri Lankan students that would benefit both countries. Both delegations welcomed ongoing efforts to preserve and celebrate Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage through cultural heritage funding received from the U.S. over the last 17 years. The delegations decided to continue collaboration to provide English Language teaching, teacher training, curriculum development, and other support to strengthen Sri Lanka's education sector.

Sri Lanka and the United States emphasized the importance of the bilateral relationship, and decided to continue cooperation on a broad range of areas to further strengthen the partnership for mutual benefit.

End text.