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வெளிநாட்டு அமைச்சு
FOREIGN MINISTRY

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Media Release

Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena attends the Asia-Pacific High Level Conference on Belt and Road Cooperation

Addressing the Asia-Pacific High Level Conference on Belt and Road Cooperation virtually on 23 June, 2021, Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena stressed the importance of enhanced cooperation among states and other partners in addressing the COVID-19 challenges, including by recognizing the vaccines as global public health good. He also highlighted Sri Lanka's policy focus and thrust on sustainable development with renewable energy as a national priority.

Emphasizing that coordinated efforts at combating the virus, early recovery from the pandemic, and people-centered development would contribute productively to economic advancement in the future, the Minister Gunawardena invited all countries to avail of the opportunities available in Sri Lanka for investment in important growth-prone sectors. He referred in this context to the emerging Colombo Port City, port infrastructure in Colombo and in Hambantota as well as key Industrial Zones.

The Minister Gunawardena also underlined the critical importance of connectivity for achieving prosperity in the region, and of integrating green development and environmental protection into national planning and programming of all states.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of China chaired the conference with the participation of dignitaries from the Asia-Pacific region and other countries as well as representatives of international and regional organizations. Foreign Secretary Admiral Prof. Jayanath Colombage was associated with Minister Gunawardena at this Conference.

Foreign Ministry
Colombo

24 June, 2021

**Statement by Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena at the
Asia-Pacific High Level Conference on Belt and Road Cooperation
23 June 2021**

His Excellency Wang Yi, State Councilor and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China
Distinguished Foreign Ministers and Dignitaries of the participating countries

It is a great pleasure to address the Asia-Pacific High Level Conference on Belt and Road Cooperation today.

Under His Excellency President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's *Vista of Prosperity and Splendour* Sri Lanka embarks on a new chapter of socio-economic development through the strengthening and increasing cooperation amongst countries and international & regional partners. Such cooperation has become increasingly pronounced today given the unprecedented challenges faced by humanity owing to the ongoing pandemic.

COVID-19 has caused severe disruptions to the health, safety and livelihoods of people. Therefore, multilateralism and international cooperation provides the best possible means to defeat the pandemic safely and sustainably, and thus sharing information amongst countries to contain the pandemic is essential.

In this context, I consider the convening of this meeting by our friend and partner, China, timely.

Excellencies

Moreover, vaccination, among other remedies, is the only sustainable solution in containing COVID-19. Unfortunately, severe supply and resource constraints have affected the vaccination drives of many developing nations.

In this regard, Sri Lanka reiterates the call for making COVID-19 vaccines a 'global public health good'. Friendship between China has been one that has seen through all seasons, good times and bad times; cultivating best friendships based on principles of 'Kalyana Mithra'.

Under His Excellency President Xi Jinping's leadership we hold at high esteem China's great humanitarian contribution and advancement shown in safeguarding People's lives in Sri Lanka as well as across the world, and in the region, in the process of eradication of COVID-19 pandemic. While fighting a global pandemic China has shown its great powers though progress shown in challenges in space arena too.

Your Excellencies

The impact of the current global pandemic on our economies and societies is disastrous. The Sri Lankan economy has also been seriously affected by the pandemic. Despite challenges, Sri Lanka aims to harness our strengths and the advantages to develop our economy and uplift the wellbeing of our people. Sri Lanka is committed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations.

Towards this end, Sri Lanka aspires to benefit from Belt and Road cooperation to further improve our economic infrastructure and advance connectivity under a win-win scenario.

With the development of Colombo Port City, that will feature a top-grade regional financial service center, world class port infrastructure in Colombo and in Hambantota as well as key Industrial Zones in several locations, Sri Lanka is confident that investors around the world will be able to benefit from these initiatives.

I wish to mention Singapore has been growing as a key Asian Financial center. I wish to mention Dubai has been growing as a key Middle-East Financial center. For a long time there had been a very dry spot in between. This long due will now be served by the "Colombo International Finance Center".

As Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, I wish to make this the opportunity to request and invite Foreign Investors to come and invest in the "Colombo International Financial City".

Excellencies

Sri Lanka is taking sweeping adaptation measures to build climate resilience and is actively participating in the global campaign to combat global warming. Sri Lanka has begun to abandon the use of chemical fertilizers and has committed to generating 70% of renewable energy too.

Accordingly, Sri Lanka recognizes the critical importance of integrating green development and environmental protection into pandemic recovery and development drives. In this regard, the Belt and Road green development initiatives provide valuable inspirations.

Sri Lanka looks forward towards working with China and its partners in achieving prosperity of all our peoples.

May all beings be well, happy and safe Ayubowan! Thank You.





