

**Statement by Hon. Foreign Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic  
of Sri Lanka, Dinesh Gunawardena (MP) at the 1<sup>st</sup> International Forum on  
Vaccine Cooperation  
05 August 2021**

His Excellency Wang Yi, State Councilor and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China  
Secretary General of the UN  
Distinguished Foreign and Health Ministers  
Director General of the WHO  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to address the first International Forum on Vaccine Cooperation, a timely meeting, in the backdrop where vaccination is the only sustainable solution at present, to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus and accelerate post-pandemic economic recovery.

In this regard, I wish to thank our close friend and partner the People's Republic of China for convening today's Forum following up from the important proposals made by H.E. President Xi Jinping at the Global Health Summit in May 2021.

Excellencies,

Recognizing the importance of early vaccination to successfully contain the pandemic, Sri Lanka launched its vaccination drive in February 2021 under the direct guidance and leadership of H.E. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Sri Lanka has achieved tremendous success in its vaccination program as it has amongst the highest daily averages in vaccinations with more than 500,000 doses administered each day during the past week.

As of 4th August 2021, nearly 91.2% of the population over the age of 30 have been inoculated and we aim to fully vaccinate all people above 30 years of age by September 2021.

In this regard, Sri Lanka wishes to sincerely thank our bilateral and international partners, especially China for the generous supply of over 8 million doses of Sinopharm vaccines, the generous gift of 2.7 million doses of vaccines and the timely supply of health equipment has immensely contributed to the success of our vaccination drive.

Your Excellencies,

International cooperation and solidarity is essential to ensure the sustainable defeat of the COVID-19 pandemic and extend our support and cooperation to the WHO & the UN in order to overcome the unprecedented challenges faced by the world at large due to the evolving risks owing to the emergence of different variants.

Strengthening joint collaborations in vaccine research, development and distribution has become paramount to make COVID-19 vaccines equitably accessible to everyone. However, severe supply and resource constraints have affected the vaccination drives of many developing nations.

Success will also be strengthened by close cooperation with all sectors of our societies, state sector, private sector, research organizations, and peoples. Our cooperation is essential as no country is insulated from the COVID 19 Wave.

Therefore, Sri Lanka wishes to reiterate its call to;

1. Facilitate the availability and affordability of COVID-19 vaccines to everyone in line with SDG 3 target to ensure access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.
2. Strengthen the COVAX mechanism and encourage vaccine manufacturing countries to take part in it to expedite the process
3. Facilitate vaccine production by countries having the capacity to do so in order to achieve health and safety on COVID-19 virus.
4. Maintain the quality of vaccine manufacture and promote more research on product enhancement

We thank China for the immense strength given to our people and to people across the world in the program to overcome COVID-19.

Sri Lanka remains committed to the Joint Statement and working with all partners in achieving these goals for the prosperity of all our peoples.

Thank you!