



විදේශ අමාත්‍යාංශය
வெளிநாட்டு அமைச்சு
FOREIGN MINISTRY

ජනරජ මහාචාර්යවරයාගේ, කොළඹ 1, ශ්‍රී ලංකාව, குடியரசு கட்டிடம், கொழும்பு 1, Republic Building, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka

44th Annual Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77

Statement issued by Hon. Dinesh Gunawardena, Foreign Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the Interactive Dialogue on Major Priority Issues and the Global Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Obstacles it poses to the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Achievement of the SDGs

Hon. Chairman

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

As a founding member of the Group of 77, Sri Lanka is pleased to participate at the 44th Annual Meeting of Foreign Ministers. The theme of this year's session is timely given the unprecedented challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The strong mandate given by the people of Sri Lanka to His Excellency the President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, at the presidential election in November last year and at the general election earlier this year, for his *Vision for Prosperity & Splendour* gives us confidence to commit ourselves further to the goals of the G-77. For over half a century the G77 has provided a platform for developing countries to articulate and promote their collective interests and negotiating capacity, on all the major international economic issues within the UN system and to promote South-South cooperation for development. It has a significant role to play in the current context, driven by the spirit of solidarity of the Global South.

This includes facilitation of exchange of technology, resources & knowledge, and financial assistance to support our collective path to development as well as strengthening collaboration for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

The Government of Sri Lanka has been managing the spread of COVID-19 through the strict implementation of health regulations in line with WHO regulations.

Sri Lanka's commitment to achieving all 18 SDGs by 2030 is reflected in the appointment of a working group to study the current status of Sri Lanka's implementation & progress towards achieving the SDGs.

The unprecedented consequences arising from the current health crisis has spilled over to economies, as reflected globally by exacerbating the vulnerabilities in trade, tourism, investment, and employment. Especially, developing countries are facing an additional burden. Sri Lanka reiterates the Group's call for adequate funding for development initiatives, enabling the developing countries to overcome the multifaceted challenges that hinder the achievement of the SDGs. In this context I recall President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's call to the international community at the Financing for Development Conference, for debt relief and to adopt fiscal policies to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

Sri Lanka's Economists, led by Dr. Gamani Corea, former Secretary General of UNCTAD, played a pioneering role in mobilizing support for South-South cooperation and the establishment of the South Commission & South Centre.

Poverty remains a great obstacle for the development of the Members States and we share the commitment of this Group to eradicate poverty in all its forms. Sri Lanka's Presidential Task Force in charge of Economic Revival and Poverty Eradication operates with the objective of creating a production economy promoting local industries. The Government has granted financial relief to over six million families and vulnerable groups and established a COVID – 19 Healthcare and Social Security Fund. We underscore the priority of making available a vaccine for COVID-19 to all.

It is essential that we concertedly seek to address the issue of climate change, fintec green economy, and mobilize our collective efforts on environmental protection.

My delegation congratulates His Excellency the President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali of Guyana for his stewardship of the Group in these challenging times. In conclusion, I reiterate Sri Lanka's commitment to the G-77, in collectively advancing the interests of the Group.

Ayubowan!

Thank you.

12 November 2020