

## **Joint Statement**

### **Foreign Ministers welcome opening of New Zealand High Commission in Colombo**

New Zealand and Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministers, Nanaia Mahuta and Dinesh Gunawardena, have welcomed the opening of the New Zealand High Commission in Colombo next week.

The Foreign Ministers, who met virtually yesterday, spoke about the opening of the High Commission as a major milestone in the bilateral relationship. Both Ministers stressed that New Zealand's diplomatic presence in Sri Lanka is a further affirmation of the significance of the steadily expanding bilateral engagement in recent times.

“Our countries and our peoples have been good friends for over 70 years, including through New Zealand’s early commitment to the Colombo Plan in 1950,” Minister Mahuta said. “Sri Lanka and New Zealand have a lot in common, as diverse, island nations making our way in a complex geostrategic world.”

“The opening of our High Commission in Colombo is a signal of New Zealand’s long-term commitment to Sri Lanka, in realms as varied as the strategic, economic, educational, cultural, sporting and people-to-people. There’s still a lot of potential to realise in our relationship, and the new High Commission is New Zealand’s recognition of that.”

Minister Gunawardena appreciated the opening of the New Zealand High Commission as a timely move as “our two countries work together in a geostrategically more complex region”. He expressed confidence that it would contribute to the advancement of bilateral trade while also supporting efforts at promoting investments. "Sri Lanka stands for and encourages safe, orderly and regular migration, and welcomes potential investors and tourists from New Zealand," emphasized Minister Gunawardena.

Minister Gunawardena also recalled the history of close bilateral relations between Sri Lanka and New Zealand and the visit to Sri Lanka of New Zealand Prime Minister Walter Nash during the tenure of Minister's Gunawardena's late father Philip Gunawardena as Minister of Agriculture and Food in 1958. Prime Minister Nash's visit featured the opening of the National Milk Board and the Dental Training Institute funded by the New Zealand Government under the Colombo Plan.

Ministers Mahuta and Gunawardena also discussed the (virtual) ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Foreign Ministers Meeting on Friday 6 August.

The New Zealand High Commission in Colombo is due to open on Tuesday 10 August. An official opening ceremony will take place in due course, once conditions permit.

Colombo

04 August, 2021

