

Welcome Remarks



Vice Admiral KKVP De Silva, WWV & Bar , RWP, RSP,VSV, USP, ndu Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy

State Minister of Defence, Honourable Ruwan Wijewardena, Admiral of the Fleet, Wasantha Karannagoda, Secretary to His Excellency the President, Mr. Udaya Senevirathne, Secretary to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ravinatha Ariyasinhe, Secretary to Ministry of Defence General Shantha Kottegoda Retired, Secretary to Ministry of Fisheries & Aquatic Resources Development, Mr. Ruwanchandra, Secretary to Ministry of Ports and Shipping, Admiral Retired Sirimevan Ranasinghe, Chiefs of Navies and Heads of Delegations, Chief of Defence Staff Admiral Ravindra Wijegunaratne, Commanders of the Sri Lanka Army Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva and Commander of the Sri Lanka Air Force Air Marshall Sumangala Dias, Distinguished Invitees, Officers, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

At the very outset let me extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to Honourable Cabinet Ministers and Hon. State Minister of Defence, Admiral of the Fleet, Secretary to His Excellency the President, Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and the Secretaries to other

Ministries, Excellencies, Chief of Defence Staff, Commanders of the Sri Lanka Army and Air Force, for accepting our invitation and being present here today to witness the 10th Edition of Galle Dialogue Maritime Conference 2019.

I also take this opportunity to welcome all the Chiefs of Navies, and other senior officers representing the navies and Coast Guards around the globe and wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude for accepting our invitation and enthusiastically participating at this august gathering to share your views and concerns on maritime aspects.

Further, let me warmly welcome and express our sincere thanks to all other invitees especially past Navy Commanders, Officers of tri forces, senior officials representing various international and local institutions for being present here to add a recognition to this conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today I am very proudly and comfortably standing in front of many distinguished leaders

and practitioners of maritime domain to make the opening remarks of the 10th Edition of Galle Dialogue Maritime Conference.

Let me recall the progress made by the Galle Dialogue Maritime Conference since 2010 which was initiated by then Commander of the Navy, Vice Admiral Thisara Samarasinghe as the premier international maritime conference in Sri Lanka. The Initial conference took place at an opportune time, one year after the defeat of the terrorism by the Sri Lankan Defence Forces. The first Galle Dialogue Conference was a landmark event in the history of the Ministry of Defence and the Sri Lanka Navy to unveil such an international conference under the theme of 'Charting the Course for Sustainable Maritime Security Cooperation'. The first Galle Dialogue Conference created a friendly atmosphere and a comfortable venue for us to disseminate hard learnt lessons that other countries could learn from our experiences and provided a forum to exchange information between the participants. I strongly believe that we have collectively achieved our aim by fostering and developing a sustainable maritime security cooperation among key players in the maritime sector. Today, it is clearly evident that there are 148 Participants representing 52 countries and 17 international organizations are seated in front of me.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 2nd and 3rd Galle Dialogue Maritime Conferences were held under the banner of 'Challenges and Strategic Cooperation for Indian Ocean Maritime Concern' and 'Strategic Maritime Cooperation and Partnership to Face the Future with Confidence' respectively and again all the participated nations and other stakeholders identified the necessity of establishing cooperation among each other as the best tool to address maritime challenges. From the 4th Galle Dialogue Maritime Conference up to the one held last year, we rallied together in Colombo to understand various maritime challenges being faced by different nations and discussed various approaches to mitigate the

same. Here, I must emphasize that collaborative and cooperative efforts and rule based order were the key concepts highlighted throughout these forums.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me draw your attention to a quotation from Robert D. Kaplan's publication Monsoon, I quote "Today despite the jet and information age, ninety percent of global commerce and two third of all petroleum suppliers travel by sea", I unquote. More shipping demands more shipping: more shipping demands comprehensive security in order to ensure unimpeded sea lanes of communication. Therefore, it is noteworthy that all maritime nations must realize the threats they are facing today. Transnational crimes, such as human smuggling, piracy, drug trafficking, maritime terrorism and maritime pollution have room to take place because of the lack of adequate domination and surveillance at sea. The increasing number of sea going vessels and their growing diversity make the identification of potential threats very difficult. Threats also exist in sea lanes of communication which in turn affect the international trade and energy security.

Therefore, countries must get-together to find solutions beyond the legal intervention in the high seas despite of the existence of various conventions, treaties or agreements whereas token joint naval exercises are no longer adequate. Furthermore, this forum is facilitating to establish cooperation among nations. This vital forum has always been promoting proper intelligence sharing and timely communication between the navies and other maritime agencies over the last nine years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference has reiterated and amply highlighted that no matter how powerful we are individually, as long as we act in isolation, we will be ineffective in mitigating present

threats being posed by non-state actors and criminals out at sea. Hence, I am certain that, understanding cooperation and collaboration efforts among us will be further enhanced with your dialogue at this conference.

Having considered all such discussions, deliberations, arguments and agreements to establish and enhance cooperation, coordination, collaboration and sharing of knowledge, experiences, resources and information among us, this year we have planned to conduct the Galle Dialogue conference under the theme of 'Refining Mindset to Address Transnational Maritime Threats: A Review of the Decade' in order to understand how all maritime stakeholders and participants of the Galle Dialogue over the last decade have responded individually or collectively to address transnational maritime threats in the ocean space. Today, I am sure that, all the presenters will be presenting their case studies or discussions based on facts, figures and lessons learnt by revisiting the issues that each nation came across during the last few years.

Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, this forum has the capacity and capability to promote security for regional and global economies by ensuring maritime security through enduring partnerships between civilians and military authorities. Further, through presenting and discussing of own experiences of contemporary maritime issues, this forum will provide a good platform for world navies and other stakeholders to introduce a new perspective to address common maritime issues and extend an opportunity for further establishment of collaborative and cooperative partnerships. Nations have developed new capabilities and capacities to meet maritime security challenges over the last decade. Now I believe, time has come to take a positive action not just discussion. We must be proactive and move ahead.

Therefore, I, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, humbly request you all to participate

effectively in this forum towards achieving our desired goals.

In concluding, I wish to mention that we have been able to successfully conduct this international maritime conference over nine consecutive years with the guidance and assistance of the Ministry of Defence. I, on behalf of the officers and sailors of the Sri Lanka Navy wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Ministry of Defence for keeping the trust in us to organize this conference and the support extended to make this event a success.

Since inception, the Galle Dialogue maritime conference has gained the momentum of attending participants from many countries and international agencies showcasing its growing strength.

The Galle Dialogue over the years has contributed immensely to discuss most of the key issues in the maritime domain. I am sure that most of us have benefitted not only by attending the conference but also through interaction and bilateral meetings. In particular, Sri Lanka Navy has achieved success in developing partnerships with regional and extra regional navies in the fields of modernizing, capacity building and mitigating common maritime security challenges especially in drug trafficking, human smuggling, conduct of SAR operations and protecting and preserving of maritime environment whilst ensuring the freedom of navigation for the legitimate seafarers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is in this context, genuine cooperation, fostering partnerships and learning of the best practices are some of the key objectives of the Galle Dialogue Maritime Conference. I am certain that the lineup of presentations, panel discussions and formal and informal interactions taking place during the coming two days will be instrumental in this regard. In closing, I wish all the participants a very interesting, thought provoking and productive

time in this year's conference while enjoying the beauty and serendipity of our country during your short stay.

I wish all the very best for the presenters, moderators and participants.

Thank you.