

# Keynote Address



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The President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena, Cabinet Ministers, State Ministers, Secretaries of Ministries, Chief of Defence Staff, Commanders of the Army, Navy and Air Force Inspector General of Police, Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Good morning.

I am honoured to address the inaugural session of the 'Galle Dialogue, International Maritime Conference 2018' as the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence. I take this opportunity to welcome all our distinguished foreign guests and thank them for their presence here. I also extend my warm welcome to the distinguished Sri Lankan participants who are present at this event.

On 11th and 12th Oct the UNODC with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka held the Conference on the theme, "The Indian Ocean defining our Future". It is heartening that today we are commencing the Galle Dialogue.

This itself proves the strong commitment we have towards peace and stability in the Indian

Ocean. The Galle Dialogue International Maritime Conference since its beginning has become an important platform for improving mutual trust, reaching consensus and strengthening cooperation for navies and other stakeholders from the regional and trans-regional countries.

Over the years, the Galle Dialogue has gained momentum and gathered a large number of maritime professionals from across world to discuss issues pertaining to maritime affairs. Following in the same footsteps, a host of experts has arrived in Colombo this year too, to contribute their expertise on this timely theme, 'Synergizing for Collaborative Maritime Management'.

The Galle Dialogue 2018 is affording a forum for regional and extra-regional players to speak on their maritime vision and management plan, discuss the challenges, and to better understand each other. It is in such a background, with renewed focus on Indian Ocean affairs, the ninth meeting of Galle Dialogue International Maritime Conference continues on its legacy of connecting the East and the West of the island of serendipity; Sri Lanka.

The opportunities and challenges that exist in the maritime domain need to be addressed; with strength, wisdom and benevolence. Therefore, it is

imperative that the maritime affairs, concerns and issues are managed in a collaborative framework in a very comprehensive manner.

International maritime conferences like the "Galle Dialogue", therefore, can play a vital role in providing a platform for much-needed discussions and ensures that stakeholders have equal access to the shared domains.

It is a well-known fact that, the Indian Ocean today is emerging as the hub of global economic activity.

This third largest water body of the world with Rim Nations of 2.7 billion population has experienced maritime threats caused by piracy, narcotics/human smuggling, terrorism, waste dumping and IUU fishing over the past few decades.

Protecting the maritime resources, countering the diverse challenges and ensuring the uninterrupted global trade is not an easy task by any means. Securing the sea lines of communication passing Sri Lanka has become a priority in the global maritime domain.

According to Admiral James Stavridis in his book on Sea Power rightly says "one of the determining factors of nation's naval power is its geography; you won't get far as a seafaring nation unless you have a good amount of coastline and easy access to open waters".

Due to Sri Lanka's geo-strategic position and easy access to the Indian Ocean, its role to secure and promote a peaceful environment in the Indian Ocean is clear to the entire world. But there are many challenges and threats we face.

These challenges could only be mitigated through regional and extra regional collaborative measure while expanding the information network and thereby to reinforce the capacity to contain maritime challenges to an appreciable level.

When looking at regional collaborative measures, this year Sri Lanka became the Chair of the BIMSTEC and this an opportunity for Sri Lanka and the Bay of Bengal regional nations to strengthen the maritime agenda of the Indian Ocean.

For a maritime environment, free from above threats and challenges there must be a combined commitment by all maritime nations of the world. Toward this, we must enhance our strengths and forge a better understanding of each other and, make a concerted effort towards maritime security of the world.

I am confident that our contributions in the fields of trade, energy, and security will be able to make a significant impact on the Indian Ocean maritime affairs.

We are aware the transshipment sector, the Indian Ocean Region has some of the busiest sea lanes, transporting the highest tonnage of merchandise in the world.

In the face of new developments of maritime security, Sri Lanka has a wider responsibility in ensuring the continued flow of this vital lifeline. Disruption to the free flow of trade through the Indian Ocean, could adversely impact the international trade and commerce.

United we win, divided we lose. Therefore, we must seek cooperation and assistance from all nations to ensure that the Indian Ocean is free from all threats and challenges. It is the responsibility of all of us as neighbors within Indian Ocean to take easy steps at our command to ensure safe navigation in the waters within our region.

Already many countries have assisted us in numerous ways and many more have forged alliance with us for developing our maritime capabilities.

In this context, synergizing individual efforts in to a collaborative plane has become a must, in ensuring safe passage in the Indian Ocean.

In today's world all nations are connected to each other by trade and commerce and economically, no nation can stick to their own agenda. Unless all nation in the region team up as a regional body through bi-lateral and multi-lateral collaboration, combating maritime threats would be an illusion.

Accordingly, a comprehensive knowledge of the maritime vision and strategies of the other players also are a necessity in order to counter impending dangers and threats.

Sri Lanka, being a nation that always pledges her support to protect the freedom of navigation and

the smooth flow of trade and energy, is prepared to work hand in hand with our regional as well as global partners for a common cause in the interest of our friendly nations.

Hence, I am fully confident that this forum, remaining true to its theme 'Synergizing for Collaborative Maritime Management' will prove itself to be a very productive forum that could formulate an effective mechanism for the betterment of the region.

I wish Galle Dialogue 2018 all the success.

Thank You!

