

**Remarks to Media by Foreign Secretary Prasad Kariyawasam  
following talks with  
US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas A. Shannon, Jr.**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Monday 6 November 2017

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Friends from the Media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted and honoured to welcome Ambassador Thomas Shannon, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and his delegation, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this evening.

This is our second meeting in the last two months or so. Ambassador Shannon and I met in New York in late September, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, when he called on His Excellency the President, to discuss the growing interaction and partnership between our two countries. Ambassador Shannon also met Finance and Media Minister Mangala Samaraweera during his visit last month to Washington DC. The Hon. Speaker of our Parliament and a multi-party delegation were in Washington in late September. The level of heightened interaction between our two countries, at all levels, is indeed heartening.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Under Secretary Shannon is no stranger to Sri Lanka, and to all our leaders, and indeed to all of you.

This is his second visit to Sri Lanka. His first visit took place in December 2015. You would all recall, I am sure, that he held a press briefing in this same building during his first visit in December 2015, at which the dates for the **first** US - Sri Lanka Partnership Dialogue were announced. Accordingly the inaugural Partnership Dialogue between the US and Sri Lanka took place in Washington DC., in February last year, 2016, shepherded by none other than, Ambassador Shannon.

Today, I am delighted to announce that Ambassador Shannon and I, together with respective officials of both countries, have held the 2<sup>nd</sup> US – Sri Lanka Partnership Dialogue.

It is, in many ways, an important milestone for our two countries.

As you know, the United States and Sri Lanka have been friends for generations. We have benefitted greatly from our interactions including in the fields of trade, commerce, people-to-people contact, education and cultural sectors, as well as defence and security cooperation. The relationship between our two countries was intensified following the elections in 2015, where the people of Sri Lanka voted for strengthening good governance, democracy, rule of law, reconciliation and sustainable peace – values that our two democracies cherish. This enabled the setting up of the mechanism called the 'Partnership Dialogue' which enables our two countries to build our relationship on a firm basis and structure, and enhance our cooperation across a wide range of areas.

The **second** Partnership Dialogue today, indicates the consolidation of this important and useful mechanism for discussion on a wider range of important issues, and areas of cooperation, between the United States and Sri Lanka.

Ambassador Shannon is the senior-most US official in the new US Administration to visit Sri Lanka. And the second Partnership Dialogue between our two countries, with Ambassador Shannon leading the US delegation, indicates the commitment on the part of the United States and Sri Lanka, across administrations, for strengthening relations spanning a broad range of areas of cooperation.

We have agreed on a **Joint Statement** following our discussions, which you will receive as you leave this Press Interaction. As you will read in the Joint Statement, cooperation between the United States and Sri Lanka cover a multitude of areas, from law enforcement to counter narcotics, counter terrorism,

helping address fiscal and debt challenges, strengthening rule of law, transparency and democracy; reconciliation and livelihood support efforts; and military cooperation – just to name a few.

Under Secretary Shannon, in his remarks, will address some of these, and also speak about new areas of cooperation and assistance to Sri Lanka.

Ambassador Shannon,

Your visit takes place close on the heels of USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, the first US Navy aircraft carrier to visit Sri Lanka in 32 years. We have had several ship visits during the last two years. Moreover, the US Marine Corps helped us to establish the Sri Lanka Marine Corps. We are extremely pleased and appreciative of these developments, and increasing military cooperation, which yields mutually beneficial bilateral and regional strategic and security benefits.

The participation in August–September, of Acting Assistant Secretary Wells, in the Indian Ocean regional conference that was held in Sri Lanka, was encouraging for us, in terms of the US engagement in pursuing joint initiatives that enhance security, stability, transparency and economic opportunity in the Indo-Pacific region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ambassador Shannon's visit this time is a very brief one. He arrived this evening, and will leave tomorrow morning. Apart from discussions with senior government officials and ministers, he has called on the Honourable Prime Minister earlier this evening, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs as well.

Under Secretary Shannon,

I am grateful to you for undertaking this visit, but I hope that your next visit to Sri Lanka would be a longer one. We look forward to staying engaged with you in the coming days, weeks and months, as our two countries work towards enhancing our bilateral relations and also engage on areas of mutual concern, regionally and globally.

I must also express my gratitude to you for your leadership in promoting US-Sri Lanka relations across administrations, and for the support you provided me personally in my capacity as Ambassador for Sri Lanka to the USA, in Washington, until recently.

I want to also place on record, our appreciation for the tireless efforts of Ambassador Atul Keshap, and his dedicated team in Colombo, who work with us closely to make the bonds between our two countries ever stronger, with each passing day.

I now invite Ambassador Shannon to address you, after which, both of us will take two questions each from the media.