

**Joint statement on strengthening bilateral relations
between the Republic of Tajikistan
and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**

1. At the invitation of the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon paid a state visit to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka on 12–14 December, 2016. During the visit, President Emomali Rahmon held official meetings with President Sirisena, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Speaker Karu Jayasuriya in Colombo.
2. Prior to the state visit, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe had met with President Rahmon, on the side lines of the 12th World Islamic Economic Forum, which was held in Jakarta, Indonesia in August 2016.
3. President Sirisena in his opening remarks at the bilateral discussions said that it was a great honour to have had the opportunity to welcome the first visit by a leader of a state in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and expressed Sri Lanka's keenness to forge close bilateral relations with the friendly countries in the CIS.
4. During the wide ranging official discussions, the President of Tajikistan and the President of Sri Lanka reaffirmed their commitment to actively advance the bilateral agenda in the political, economic, social and cultural areas. In this regard, they noted with satisfaction the proposed programmes for expanding cooperation in the areas of trade and investment, education and tourism among others, and agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the following areas:

Political Relations

5. The two leaders recognized the importance of increased and regular high level interaction and engagement, including at the senior officials' level to promote and develop multi-dimensional bilateral cooperation between Tajikistan and Sri Lanka. Towards realizing this objective, and to provide for structured and regular interaction between the two countries, the bilateral legal framework was formalized by signing the Memorandum of Understanding on Political Consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan.
6. Recognizing the importance of inter-parliamentary cooperation through exchange of parliamentary delegations, both sides underlined the need to establish Parliamentary friendship groups in the national parliaments of Sri Lanka and Tajikistan.
7. President Sirisena and President Rahmon agreeing on the significant role played by the diplomatic missions of both countries in strengthening and advancing the overall bilateral agenda, welcomed the appointment of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Tajikistan to Sri Lanka and the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Sri Lanka to Tajikistan.

Economic, Trade and Investment Cooperation

8. The two leaders agreed to optimize the new and emerging investment and trade opportunities in each other's countries' in the specific areas of finance and banking, renewable energy, including hydro-energy, light industries, apparel and textiles, agriculture and food processing,

healthcare, information technology, transport logistics and tourism. In this context, the leaders emphasized the need to explore the establishment of a Joint Economic Commission at ministerial level to pursue and maximise business, trade and technical cooperation.

9. Expressing a keenness to promote commercial engagement between the two countries, President Sirisena and President Rahmon welcomed the proposed establishment of the Tajik-Sri Lanka Business Council and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Tajikistan. The two leaders further encouraged active private sector business linkages through exchanges of trade missions and participation in economic conferences and trade exhibitions in each others' countries. Both sides expressed the readiness to ensure a favourable legal framework and an enabling environment in their respective countries for Tajik and Sri Lankan investors and entrepreneurs to explore and set up joint ventures, including in the special economic zones and industrial parks in each country.
10. In this regard the two leaders welcomed the initialing of the Aide Memoire between the Ministry of Development Strategies and International Trade of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan on the draft text of an Agreement on Mutual Cooperation.

Cooperation in the Areas of Culture, Education, tourism, sport and People-People Contacts

11. Both sides exchanged views on the shared cultural linkages and values between the two countries, and discussed proposals for promoting and expanding cooperation in the areas of culture, education, sports, tourism and people-people contacts.
12. In this regard the two Leaders welcomed the signing of the following agreement and the memorandum of understanding between Sri Lanka and Tajikistan:
 - Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka on Cooperation in the Field of Physical Training and Sport.
 - Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka on Cooperation in the Field of Tourism.
13. President Sirisena and President Rahmon recognizing the importance of the education sector in both countries, welcomed proposals for promoting cooperation in higher education, including vocational training through the exchange of faculty members and students, as well as undertaking joint research in areas of common interest.
14. The two leaders also discussed and agreed to explore the possibility of providing diplomatic and Sinhala language training for junior Tajik diplomats in Sri Lanka.

Security Cooperation and Regional and International Issues

15. President Sirisena and President Rahmon recognized the threats posed by terrorism, extremism, illicit drugs trafficking and other transnational organized crimes to national, regional and international security, and agreed to strengthen bilateral security cooperation by exploring the establishment a working group between the relevant agencies of the two countries.

16. Both leaders appreciated the ongoing cooperation between the two countries within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the United Nations (UN) and other regional and international fora. In order to further enhance such cooperation within the UN, they agreed to support shared interests, including the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and consideration of support for the candidatures of the two countries to United Nations bodies and international organizations.
17. President Sirisena welcomed and expressed support for the new International Decade for Action under the motto 'Water for Sustainable Development' proposed by President Rahmon to the United Nations General Assembly for promoting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals related to water.

Concluding Remarks

18. President Emomali Rahmon expressed his gratitude to President Maithripala Sirisena, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and the people of Sri Lanka for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to him and his delegation during the state visit.
19. The President of Tajikistan took the opportunity to invite the President of Sri Lanka to undertake a state visit to Tajikistan.
20. President Sirisena thanked President Rahmon for the invitation and said that he looked forward to visiting the Republic of Tajikistan at a mutually convenient period early next year.

Colombo
14 December 2016