

Joint Statement
during the State Visit of H. E. Maithripala Sirisena,
President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
to the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 15 July 2017

1. At the invitation of H. E. Sheikh Hasina, Hon. Prime Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, H. E. Maithripala Sirisena, Hon. President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka paid a State Visit to Bangladesh during 13 to 15 July 2017. The Hon. President of Sri Lanka was accompanied by Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. State Minister for Agriculture, Hon. State Minister for Higher Education & Highways, Hon. Deputy Minister for Finance & Mass Media and Hon. Deputy Minister for Ports & Shipping of Sri Lanka and also a high-level business delegation from Sri Lanka.
2. President Sirisena was received by H. E. Mr Md Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of Bangladesh and accorded a ceremonial welcome at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka. Hon'ble President of Bangladesh hosted a Banquet dinner in honour of President Sirisena on 14 July.
3. President Sirisena paid homage at the National Mausoleum in Savar, Bangladesh in memory of the martyrs of the 1971 War of Liberation. He also paid tribute to the memory of the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, Dhaka.
4. Recalling the visionary leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, President Sirisena appreciated his dream of 'Sonar Bangla' which is being realized under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.
5. During the visit, President Sirisena held meetings with President H E Md. Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister H E Sheikh Hasina and Speaker of Parliament H E Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The Leader of the Opposition in Bangladesh Jatiya Sangshad, Foreign Minister and Health Minister of Bangladesh also paid courtesy call on President Sirisena.
6. President Sirisena addressed a high-level business/Economic Dialogue in Dhaka on 15 July 2017 organized by Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) and Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), in collaboration with Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Bangladesh. The Dialogue was attended, among others, by leading businessmen from both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.
7. President Sirisena and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina held discussions on all aspects of Bangladesh-Sri Lanka relations as also contemporary international and regional issues of common interest. The two leaders affirmed to further strengthen the bilateral relations and engagements based on mutual trust and respect, a vision of securing shared prosperity through mutually beneficial win-win partnership. They reiterated that Bangladesh – Sri Lanka relationship was anchored in commonalities of history, culture, language and shared values of pluralism, secularism, democracy and development. They re-affirmed their common aspiration for peace, stability, harmony, prosperity and sustainable development of the region and beyond.
8. President Sirisena conveyed Sri Lanka's deep appreciation to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for Bangladesh's generous contribution of cash US\$ 500,000 as humanitarian assistance towards the flood affected people of Sri Lanka at a time when Bangladesh herself was affected by Cyclone 'Mora'. He also expressed his condolences at the loss of lives, livelihood and property during the hill slides in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

9. President Sirisena expressed Sri Lanka's appreciation to the Bangladesh leadership for extending Bangladesh's valuable support to Sri Lanka at the Human Rights Council and other United Nations and international organizations bodies.
10. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina appreciated President Sirisena's pro-people leadership, mutually beneficial neighbourhood policy, initiatives to develop infrastructure and the vision to accomplish equitable socio-economic development. She applauded President Sirisena for the numerous steps taken by his government towards national unity, reconciliation and development.
11. President Sirisena applauded the socio-economic development in Bangladesh under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and lauded Bangladesh's accomplishments in food self-sufficiency, energy, agriculture, disaster management, women empowerment, climate change adaptation, infrastructure development, education, etc. He also commended Prime Minister Hasina's global leadership in development and her contribution to promoting peace, security, stability and democracy in Bangladesh and beyond.
12. The two leaders recalled the atrocities that took place during Bangladesh's War of Liberation in 1971. Noting the resolution adopted by Bangladesh Parliament declaring 25 March as the 'Genocide Day' in Bangladesh, they acknowledged the necessity of recognition of the unforgettable sufferings borne by the innocent, freedom-loving people of Bangladesh in 1971.
13. Recognising the threats arising out of terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization on any religious or societal pretext, the leaders pledged to work together to counteract all such challenges in both countries and beyond. In countering the challenges in the region and beyond, They agreed to work towards convening a broad-based dialogue on tolerance, inclusion and pluralism in 2018.
14. President Sirisena and Prime Minister Hasina welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Economic Partnership between the two countries which should pave way for conclusion of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by end-2017.
15. Taking into account the advantages, opportunities and complementarities that Bangladesh and Sri Lanka enjoy, the Leaders recognised the potential for collaborative partnership between the private sectors of the two countries, particularly in high-end apparel and textiles, information technology and related knowledge industry, religious and eco-tourism, gems and jewellery and precious metal, agriculture and agro-processing, fisheries–livestock–dairy–horticulture, health management, infrastructure development and construction, pharmaceuticals, energy and power. They underlined that investments from both countries could profit through increased joint ventures, public-private partnerships. They encouraged sectoral industries, industry associations, chambers, etc. of the two countries for greater dialogue towards beneficial and result-oriented collaboration, including investment.
16. The two leaders acknowledged a sizable presence of Sri Lankan workers and professionals in Bangladesh across manufacturing and service sectors making it one of the largest such presence of Sri Lankan professionals in the region. They agreed to work towards facilitating movement for the citizens of both countries in a more mutually beneficial manner.
17. Acknowledging that trade between the two countries is far below the potential, the two leaders agreed that in case of the economically meaningful exportables, tariff should be further lowered and non-tariff barriers addressed expeditiously. Noting the potential of mutually beneficial collaboration in Pharmaceutical sector, Bangladesh requested Sri Lanka to simplify the registration process for Bangladeshi pharmaceuticals at the earliest.

18. In order to reap the benefits of wider economic partnership, the leaders directed the concerned authorities for early finalisation of the agreements on customs cooperation, avoidance of double taxation and promotion and protection of investment between the two countries.
19. Both sides further agreed to engage in facilitating mutually beneficial investments in respective Special Economic Zones, Industrial Parks, Hi-Tech Parks, etc. They expressed optimism that conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) and the Board of Investment (BoI) (Sri Lanka) would facilitate mutual investments. They further welcomed conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Bangladesh Bank and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka which should *inter alia* facilitate mutual collaboration in financial sector and development of financial services.
20. Recognising the demographic profile and patterns of the two economies, both sides agreed to collaborate on development of skills and human resources and encourage innovative partnerships. They welcomed signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in ICT and Digital Technology *inter alia* to facilitate greater collaboration and partnership between the ICT and related knowledge industry and relevant private sector of the two countries. They also noted with appreciation signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between SLITA and CBIFT as an instance of innovative partnership.
21. Recognising the potential for cooperation in maritime affairs and blue economy between the two countries, the two leaders agreed to work together to explore new areas and innovative means to tap opportunities in developing the Bay of Bengal into a region of peace, growth and prosperity.
22. The two leaders underlined shipping as one of the key areas with potential for mutually beneficial cooperation which should result in improved connectivity and open up further opportunities for bilateral trade between the two countries and beyond. They emphasized on completing the ongoing negotiations on the Agreement on Coastal Shipping early. They welcomed the signing of Memorandum of Understanding between Bangladesh Shipping Corporation and Ceylon Shipping Corporation.
23. Both sides recognised the importance of enhanced air connectivity to promote people-to-people contact, tourism and trade. Sri Lankan side expressed optimism that Bangladeshi carriers would start operating flights to Colombo soon to meet the growing traffic.
24. President Sirisena complemented Bangladesh's advancement in poverty alleviation, rural development and ensuring food security of people and accomplishments in agriculture sector. The two leaders welcomed the conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding to foster comprehensive cooperation in agriculture. They noted growing interest and potential for collaboration in agro-processing, agro-business, technological innovation, supply chain development involving private sector of the two countries in beneficial manner. Bangladesh welcomed Sri Lankan farmers for exposure visit to /training in agriculture extension, practices, innovation in rice farming in Bangladesh.
25. In keeping with long-standing friendship and spirit of regional cooperation, Bangladesh offered to share her knowledge, expertise and experience in disaster management and climate change adaptation capabilities.
26. Acknowledging growing interaction among the peoples of the two countries, the two Leaders agreed to deepen people-to-people contact and cultural exchange. Bangladesh proposed to hold a range of events to show case Bangladeshi culture and heritage in Sri Lanka, including fine arts, feature films, saree, music, cuisine, etc. They emphasised on regular holding of cultural exchange programmes in the two countries; and promote interactions among media,

think tanks, youth, local authorities, civil society of the two countries. Noting the significant potential in tourism, Bangladesh proposed for forming a platform drawing tour operators and other related hospitality sector stakeholders of the two countries.

27. The two leaders emphasised the need for enhanced interaction and increased high-level exchanges. They welcomed the formation of the Parliamentary Friendship groups in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka Parliaments; and encouraged the legislators to play catalytic role in deepening interaction and relations on issues of common interest.
28. In deepening interaction and collaboration in higher education, the two leaders welcomed the Memorandum of Understanding between the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Building on that, both sides agreed to facilitate wider tie-up between Sri Lanka Universities of Bangladeshi Higher Educational Institutions.
29. Sri Lanka welcomed the scholarships offered and facilities extended by Bangladesh to Sri Lankan students in pursuing higher studies in Bangladesh, including medicine. Bangladesh welcomed Sri Lanka's support in training Bangladeshi nurses and other health professionals.
30. Reiterating their commitment to multilateralism, the two sides acknowledged increased interaction and cooperation between the two countries on contemporary multilateral issues like climate change, disaster management, migration, health, peacekeeping, etc. at the UN and other regional and international platforms. They further agreed to share respective knowledge, ideas, innovation to effectively realise the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and the SDGs.
31. The two leaders underlined the need for a peaceful, stable, inclusive and sustainable South Asian region. They agreed to deepen cooperation in various sub-regional and regional cooperation mechanisms; and to work towards focussed and result-oriented regional economic cooperation in BIMSTEC and SAARC.
32. The two sides noted with satisfaction the ongoing cooperation in the area of defense through exchange of training and goodwill visits.
33. The two leaders expressed their deep satisfaction at the signing of fourteen (14) instruments of cooperation, including in trade and investment, agriculture, information and communication technology, higher education, finance, and overall people-to-people connectivity.
34. President Sirisena appreciated the warm hospitality and courtesies extended to him and his delegation by the government and the people of Bangladesh during the visit.
35. President Sirisena extended an invitation to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to visit Sri Lanka at a mutually convenient time in 2018.

15 July 2017, Dhaka