

**Verbatim Transcript of Question & Answer with
US Under Secretary of State & Foreign Secretary following Remarks to Media**

Question: Ambassador, Sri Lanka is at the moment recovering from a debt crisis. I mean in your discussion did you focus anything on helping on debt and fiscal consolidation?

Under Sec: Up to this point, no. But we are going to dinner afterwards and having a chance to talk with the Minister of Finance who I saw in Washington also as the Foreign Secretary noted. And we are quite happy to engage on the issue of debt. It is quite an important one. Obviously, we want to make sure that as Sri Lanka advances, that it does so in a way that allows it to take full advantage of its lending capabilities, and has a financial structure to its development- that is sustainable and enduring

Question: Ambassador, this is Sulochana from the Ceylon Today Newspaper. My question is that USA sponsored the resolution (US at the UNHRC). And now we have been hinted that the USA, is trying to withdraw from the United Nations, the UNHRC. So how serious is the USA regarding the reconciliation process we are working on?

Under Sec: I'm sorry I did not quite catch the question, when you said we were withdrawing from..?.

Question: The UN...UNHCR, is there something? That the US really wanted to withdraw. There is something, a hint going on.

Under Sec: Ok, I'm not hinting. First of, let me make a bigger point here. We played a significant role in the creation of the United Nations in the aftermath of the World War II. Secretary of the State Cordell Hull won the Nobel Peace Prize for the role of the US played in creating the United Nations. We are committed to the United Nations. We are committed to the important role that it has played over time. At the same time we are committed to its good governance and to reforming the United Nations to ensure that it remains relevant, both in terms of its management structure, its financial structure but also its political purpose. Our Ambassador to the United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley has made no secret of our concern about some aspects of United Nations behavior, especially its singling out of Israel for special attention and not always positive attention. This remains very important to us.. We want to make sure that all countries are treated with an even hand and treated in a positive fashion within the UN context. But in this regard, our purpose has always been to work within the UN institutions and wherever possible. And so, as far as the HRC is concerned, I think we are there to stay. Thank you for the question.

For. Sec: If his two questions are done? But if there is anyone who has to raise a question in Sinhala, I can translate. If not, can we take,.. this question is for him? Will you take one more?..

Under Sec: Oh, yeah, sure..

For. Sec: Yes, please. Go ahead..

Question: I have a question for Mr. Kariyawasam. Given the accelerated pace of the US and Sri Lanka military to military relations in recent times, how would you say, what is the bearing of this development on Sri Lanka's non-aligned status? Are we still a non-aligned country?

For. Sec: Sri Lanka remains non-aligned. If you call it, we have a partnership, it's a partnership we have with the US. It's not an an alliance as such. So it's a partnership and having partnerships with many countries, does not contradict Sri Lanka's policy of non-alignment in terms of our political approach to international affairs. And Sri Lanka as

you know, is a country that believes in inclusive relations, rather than exclusive relations. So our very close partnership with the US, we believe is a positive element in our approach towards international relations that is based on not having alliance relationships.

Question: Secretary Shannon, last week a delegation from the EU was here in Sri Lanka visiting areas in the North and visiting Colombo. They said that they were disappointed with the pace of reconciliation reforms promised by the current government. Do you have any comment on the pacing of reforms and America's concerns?

Under Sec: Thank you for the question. It is an important one. Obviously, we all want a fast pace. And I think nobody wants it more than the Sri Lankan people and the Sri Lankan Government. You know, as I noted in my remarks, the whole world is watching Sri Lanka because of the incredible commitment it has made to overcoming the consequences of the conflict here in Sri Lanka. And the way in which it has sought to address issues of reconciliation and reform. And the rest of the world want Sri Lanka to be successful because they realize that Sri Lanka could be an example or a model that is immediately relevant to many other countries around the world. So, we all want to see things moving faster. But at the same time, we recognize that we are operating in a political context and political environment that Sri Lanka is emerging from a very complicated and violent conflict. Therefore we are prepared to work with Sri Lanka and help it along its way, recognizing through that, it is the Sri Lankans themselves that have to make this move. So, I think the short answer to your question is, we always want these things to go faster. But we want to make sure that as they are completed and consolidated, that they are enduring and sustainable. And this is why we are going to be Sri Lanka's partner throughout this entire process.

For. Sec: Thank you very much. Don't forget to take the copy of the Joint Statement when you go out. Thank you very much.

End of Interaction with Media