

**Remarks by Hon. Dinesh Gunawardena, Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka
at the General Debate of the Mid-term Ministerial Conference (online)
of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)
13-14 July 2021**

H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov
The Chair and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan,
Excellencies

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Non Aligned Movement. As one of the founding members of the movement Sri Lanka has remained committed to the principles of NAM.

We also appreciate the active role of the Chairmanship of Azerbaijan. Adoption of the political declaration at this meeting highlights the emphasis we place on the priorities and principles of the NAM for our work ahead.

We appreciate convening of this mid-term conference this year. With our movement embracing 120 Nation States of the UN- the topic “Non-Aligned Movement at the center of multilateral efforts in responding to global challenges” of our general debate is most timely and pertinent.

Sri Lanka as a founding member of NAM would like to recall that the movement was able to end colonialism and bring about the birth of many Independent states across the world. We also recall NAM was able to work towards the creation of UNCTAD, and promote South-South Cooperation, new instruments in the international finance, trade, aid and grants.

The World’s first woman Prime Minister Sri Lanka’s Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike chaired the NAM conference in Colombo which was historic and later chaired by Mrs. Indira Gandhi Prime Minister of India in New Delhi, the largest parliamentary democracy in the world.

Today, we are confronted with multiple challenges that pose grave risks to our endeavors towards achieving the SDG 2030 agenda. The global COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges. The passing of the death toll of 4 million people last week is a reminder that we need to work collectively to vanquish this pandemic affecting the world.

We recall Sri Lanka's president H.E. Gotabaya Rajapaksa's, declared policy of '*Vistas of Prosperity & Splendor*' and our support extended to NAM at its online summit last year. We are pleased that the NAM was amongst the earliest to play a central role to mobilize global efforts to address the pandemic by establishing a NAM task force to assess the assistance needed by its members. A Special Session of the General Assembly to respond to the pandemic on the initiative of Azerbaijan and the passage of the resolution on ensuring equitable and universal access to vaccines were also notable successes.

It is well to remember that having unanimous support of the NAM means having a nearly two thirds of the UN membership, which is surely a force to be reckoned with.

Sri Lanka reiterates its firm commitment to the principles of the NAM Movement. Sri Lanka support to steer this movement through these crucial times.

Today we also have to address the post COVID challenges, the call for the debt moratorium, and climate change that all our countries are faced with.

I thank you.