

**Statement by H.E. Gotabaya Rajapaksa,
President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
At the High-Level Meeting to Commemorate the 75th Anniversary
of the United Nations
21 September 2020**

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,

Ayubowan !

Your Excellency Volkan Bozkir, I congratulate you on being elected as the President of the 75th Session of the General Assembly.

I am deeply honoured to represent the people of Sri Lanka on this historic occasion.

Unfortunately, the world is not what the founders of this august body envisaged 75 years ago.

The world is plagued by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, which has jeopardized our economies, health systems and indeed our societies, just within a few months. We need collective action to face this challenge.

Sri Lanka was able to successfully face the challenge of COVID-19 through a proactive intervention. We established the National Action Committee for Preventing COVID-19 even before the first patient was detected in Sri Lanka. Our approach synchronized the military, health as well as civilian authorities of national and regional levels.

Sri Lanka's recovery rate stands over 90%, well above the global recovery rate. Our success story owes much to our reliance upon 'tracing and quarantine', which was our greatest strength.

Sri Lanka has not reported a single case arising within the local society for over a month now.

Excellencies,

Sri Lanka has committed to the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development. Poverty alleviation through an agri-based production economy is a major goal of my Government.

The steps that we had initiated earlier this year for enhancing local production, partial restrictions on imports as well as assisting small and medium scale entrepreneurs paid their dividend.

As we celebrate 65 years of UN membership this year, Sri Lanka is pleased to have contributed significantly to United Nation's agenda, ranging from peacekeeping operations to programmes of its specialized agencies.

Several Sri Lankan nationals have held important positions, including that of the Secretary General of UNCTAD and Under- Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs.

Multilateralism is becoming increasingly important in the wake of calamities such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a time when the world is facing a common and an unrivalled threat, the *"United Nations We Need"*, I am certain, will place due emphasis on the sovereign equality of States, respect for territorial integrity and non-interference in their domestic affairs.

Excellencies,

I firmly believe that partnerships fostered between Member States and the UN continues at their best when no country is held hostage to the interests of a few. That will restore any erosion in the trust that countries have in this august Body and all its Institutions.

Sri Lanka is hopeful that we of the United Nations would rededicate ourselves in efforts to strengthen this great institution to ensure the future we want. We owe our peoples and future generations no less.

Thank you.