MESSAGE ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION OF
VEN. KATUGASTOTA UPARATANA THERO, CHIEF INCUMBENT OF
MARYLAND BUDDHIST VIHARA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

As the first citizen of Sri Lanka, I offer my respect and salutation to the Most Venerable Katugastota Uparatana Thero, Chief Judiciary Sanganayake of the United States and the Chief Incumbent of the Maryland Buddhist Vihara in Wheaton, MD, USA on the 50th anniversary of his ordaining to the Buddha Sasana as a monk. Well known for his ability to influence and illuminate the spiritual path of Sri Lankan Americans in line with Buddhist values, the Most Venerable Uparatana Thero is a living symbol of the first advice of the Lord Buddha: “Bahujana hitaya - bahujana sukhaya” (for the happiness of the many, for the welfare of the many). Following his period as a novice monk, due to his spiritual advancement and intellectual accomplishment, higher ordination was conferred upon him in 1966 under Most Ven. Henepola Gunaratana Nayake Thero and Most Venerable Muruddeniye Ratanapala Maha Thero.

Most Venerable Katugastota Uparatana Thero represents the new generation of erudite Maha Sangha, qualified to take the message of Buddhism to a wider audience. After graduating from the University of Kelaniya, Ven. Uparatana Thero travelled to the United States as an assistant to the Most Ven. Henepola Gunaratana Nayake Thero of Washington Buddhist Vihara. Among other noble pursuits, he has been serving as the Buddhist Chaplain of the American University since 1989 and taught Sinhala Language and Culture at the US Foreign Service Institute.

The 50 years of ecclesiastical life of Most Venerable Katugastota Uparatana Thero, is replete with service, not only to the Buddha Sasana, but also to the Sri Lankan American community in the United States, primarily through Buddhist temples in the United States, in particular, the Maryland Buddhist Vihara in Wheaton MD, the Austin Buddhist Vihara in Pflugerville, Texas and the Austin Buddhist Center in Del Valle, Texas. And Sri Lankan Buddhist temples abroad could function as a window to Sri Lankan culture and as a platform for socio-cultural interaction of all communities of Sri Lankan origin living overseas. The Maha Sanga living abroad too can play a critical role in promoting social and communal harmony, as well as social progress in Sri Lanka.
I am pleased that the Most Venerable Katugastota Uparatana Thero has been honoured both in Sri Lanka and in the United States, for his service to people. I value the efforts of Ven. Uparatana Thero in enabling Sri Lankan Americans to mobilize with my government to embark on a new historic journey for building a reconciled, inclusive and harmonious society in Sri Lanka.

On this occasion I wish the Most Venerable Katugastota Uparatana Thero good health and a long life to continue with his religious and social services.

30th August, 2016

Maithripala Sirisena