

Remarks for the State Department Farewell

- Thank you Under-Secretary Ambassador Shannon for those very generous words; and thank you to all of you who are here today, for taking the time to join me, as I wind up as Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the US.
- As I conclude my tenure, I depart with a deep sense of satisfaction that our shared efforts over the past two-and-a-half years or so, have mapped the course for an enduring partnership between our two countries in the years to come.
- And I am heartened that I will continue to have a part in nurturing this important relationship, in my new role as Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Let me share with you a small anecdote. When I first arrived in this city to take up my assignment as Ambassador in mid-2014, a friend, who was working in this very building at the time said, "Ambassador, you won't have much to do here. Just keep playing golf. US is full of great golf courses". Though I was somewhat taken aback by this "friendly advice", I have to admit, that it summed up the state of affairs at that time between Sri Lanka and the United States.
- However, just about 6 months into my term here, things took a dramatic turn. The people of our country, exercising their long cherished franchise, elected a new President in January 2015. The transformation of this historic event engendered a path breaking revival of our bilateral relations, and our partnership has now reached unprecedented heights.

- This ensured that I got to play very little golf. But this renewal and transformation of the US-Sri Lanka relationship has ensured that I leave this country more certain than ever before, that our relationship will continue to move in an upward trajectory. The doors have been opened to harness the fullest potential for expanding cooperation into ever-widening subject areas, in time to come.
- I need to recall at least a few of the many landmark achievements in our bilateral relations during the last few years, especially since many of you who work in this building are very much a part of this success.
- The inaugural Partnership Dialogue between our two countries in 2016, contains a framework for the pursuit of our bilateral cooperation in a structured manner, in the years to come. Ambassador Shannon, you were instrumental in the creation of this Partnership Dialogue, and you were very much a part of that historic inaugural event. I thank you for your visionary leadership.
- Our bilateral relations during my tenure were marked by several high-level bilateral visits. Secretary John Kerry's visit to Sri Lanka in 2015 was the first of its kind in over four decades. The visit of the PACOM Commander, Admiral Harry Harris last December, was invaluable for the renewal of mil-mil cooperation. Several US naval vessels have called on Sri Lanka's Ports. The then Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Mangala Samaraweera, visited the U.S just a month after President Sirisena's government took office in January 2015, and again for the inaugural Partnership Dialogue in 2016. Many high-level visits and interactions

including parliamentary and congressional visits have taken place and are continuing.

- The Millennium Challenge Corporation's consecutive selection of Sri Lanka for a threshold programme in 2015, and for a Compact in 2016, is no doubt a recognition of the significant strides that the Government and people of Sri Lanka have made in our transformative path towards a rights-based, people-centric approach to governance and democratic practice.
- The list of Sri Lanka's landmark achievements are too many to mention. Yet, the hard and challenging work that the government and the people of Sri Lanka committed to, and have since delivered, underpin the progress in our bilateral relations. And this trend, no doubt, continues in spirit and substance through the transition of the US administration. Like all relationships, constant care and nurturing is required to sustain and guide our relations to greater heights.
- I am happy that in my new avatar as the Foreign Secretary, I will continue to have the opportunity to contribute to the Sri Lanka – US partnership for reaching levels of excellence that will be mutually rewarding.
- As I leave, I wish to express my appreciation for the support and counsel I received from those in both US Administrations, present and past, whom I was privileged to work with.

- Though I wind up as Ambassador to the USA, I want to say that I will forever, remain an Ambassador for 'US-Sri Lanka relations.' I believe there is so much that our two countries, though geographically distant, can achieve for mutual benefit. This is my third stint in the United States, in my long career in the Foreign Service. And I would like to thank many brilliant dedicated US officials who I have had the good fortune to meet and interact with over the years. I am also grateful to the people of this great country, across generations, for their generosity, their vision, and their deep commitment to shaping our modern rules-based international system, and for always striving for the best, for the greater good of humanity.
- We in Sri Lanka love visitors and enjoy being hosts. So I will wind up my remarks by inviting all of you to visit Sri Lanka. And I look forward to reciprocating the hospitality I received from you during my assignment in this wonderful country.
- Long live the Sri Lanka-US partnership!