

# Welcome Remarks



## **Vice Admiral T.J.L. Sinniah, WWV, RWP, RSP\*\*, USP, ctf ndu, psc** Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy

Guest of Honour Former President Madama Chandrika Bandaranayake Kumarathunga  
Chief guest -Honourable State Minister of Defence  
Ruwan Wijewardena,  
Honourable Ministers  
Excellencies, Ministry Secretaries, Chief of Defence Staff, Commander of the Army, Commander of the Air force, Inspector General of Police, Chiefs of Navies from Fiji and Philippines, Flag officers, Delegates  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and privilege to warmly welcome our Chief Guest the State Minister of Defence, Honourable Ruwan Wijewardena to the Galle Dialogue 2017. Sir, this is your second time with us, and we thank you as you have always shown a keen interest in the proceedings of the Dialogue. We appreciate your gracious presence.

On behalf of the President of Sri Lanka the Honourable Maithipala Sirisena the commander in chief of the Defence forces of Sri Lanka, Ministry of Defence and the Sri Lanka Navy, let me formally welcome this distinguished gathering to the Galle Dialogue Maritime Conference which is being held for the 7th successive year. I am delighted to note that 51 countries and 12 organizations are being

represented here today, which amply demonstrate the high standing and significance this conference holds amongst the Maritime fraternity. We, as the organizers of this dialogue, are proud of this achievement and will continue this symposium into the future, finding and developing solutions to meet maritime challenges.

The theme of this year's conference, "Greater Maritime Visibility for Enhanced Maritime Security", focuses on the challenges faced by maritime law enforcement agencies that endeavor to maintain a high degree of surveillance and enhanced maritime domain awareness.

It is true that despite many advances made in maritime surveillance and intelligence gathering, the oceans are still exploited for a plethora of illegal activities both by state and non-state actors. Many gaps and ungoverned space remain in the global commons.

Managing maritime security is a challenging endeavor, and I am sure this nautical assembly will agree that it demands cooperation and collaboration amongst global stakeholders. It is time a consensus is established on cooperation amongst states to share information in creating the finest real time picture of what goes on in the oceans of the world.

In today's economy the oceans have an increased significance requiring all countries to be able to participate in the global market place. Shipping is the heart of the global economy, but it remains vulnerable. International commerce could be at risk at the key trading hubs as well as at the strategic chokepoints. The right of vessels to travel freely in international waters, engage in innocent transit passage and have access to ports is an essential element of international security.

We need to protect the freedom of the sea's and maintain a rule based international order, so that power is not misused, threats to peace and stability from friction between countries are managed through negotiation based on International law and the threat of violent non-state actors addressed by global action.

As an Island state, Sri Lanka's maritime well-being has been vital throughout the nation's history. A peaceful, tranquil and secure Indian ocean is essential to its prosperity. It is prudent that we continue to recognize this fact and not make the error of slipping into state of complacency leading to "maritime blindness", meaning that we apply our total consciousness and intellect in how we deal with issues as they develop in this part of the world.

We recognize a requirement in establishing a worldwide common Maritime Domain awareness organization, which will be an integrated information-sharing grid, aiding in detecting and tackling threats emanating from the sea in real time. The aim is to generate a common operational picture of activities at sea through an institutionalized mechanism for collecting, fusing and analysing information from technical and other sources.

To achieve persistent Maritime domain awareness, we must re-orient and integrate legacy systems with current and emerging capabilities. The maritime domain presents a broad array of

potential targets that fit terrorists' operational objectives in achieving high shock value and catastrophic scale attacks.

This gathering will acknowledge that the basis for effective deterrence is awareness and knowledge of the threat, along with the capability of interdiction. Real time awareness grants one the advantage of time and space in detecting, deterring, interdicting and defeating the adversary.

These challenges to our security and economic livelihood require a new mindset – one that sees the total threat and takes all necessary actions through an active, layered defense-in-depth and the initiative to have the capacity for sustainable deployment to guard the sea.

In conclusion, I believe that the deliberations that will be articulated during the next two days within this august gathering will confer ways and means to augment "Maritime Visibility", through constructive deliberations that stem from a tactical level, up to a strategic and policy level.

We envisage expanding partnerships to take on tomorrow's problems, and training to meet future roles and future missions. The Galle dialogue will review the last years' operations and developments at sea, learn lessons and re-chart our way forward. I hope that this discourse creates a climate of critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, and objective analysis, which aids in the molding of new solutions to existing and predicted issues on the oceans.

I repeat the need to invest in partnerships and cooperation, in order to provide the visibility we need to keep the oceans of the world safe, and secure for all. As the saying goes, "individually we are a drop, together we are an ocean".

I take this opportunity to thank you all for your gracious presence at Galle dialogue 2017. I wish you all fair winds and following seas.