

**CONCLUDING REMARKS MADE BY VICE ADMIRAL TSG SAMARASINGHE,**  
**COMMANDER OF THE SRI LANKA NAVY**  
**DURING THE NAVAL AND MARITIME SYMPOSIUM**

Your Excellencies, Chiefs of Navies, former Naval Chiefs, Defence attaches, Commanding Officers and other distinguished guests. May I apologise for not being present in the morning. Call of duty took me away. I came out of the meeting before you went for lunch. But I skipped my lunch to see your presentations and to go through some of the notes made on my behalf. So I'm fully prepared to do my concluding remarks.

Today we are gathered to discuss the theme S5 and our speakers today starting with none other than the Indian Admiral who gave some important thoughts to the region. He belongs to a country and an ocean named by their country and he knows how important this region is for all of us. What struck me most, was the use of regional maritime instruments for the cooperation and the importance of working together to overcome the challenges. But it's coming from an Indian Admiral. He was speaking of transferring competition to cooperation. If you know how important that statement for the region. I believe at times competition is healthy but if it is used in the right attitude and right perspective. So it is important that we cooperate without any difference. To do that we need to make friends. If we are not friendly enough we start fighting.

So it is in that context that we need to cooperate through friendship like we have done today to met each other under one roof coming from all corners. If you just look at to your right you know how far distances you all have travelled. So we have been able to take everybody onboard and you got to engage without disengaging. So I thank Admiral Chawla for a very informative and the very important assessment that you have made. I will be going through little fast. The US Admiral, who is my dear friend who obliged my last minute request, Admiral Horton, who obliged with a request to speak on US Navy's corporation strategy for security. Yes, we all know the powers the US Navy had and still have. Of course, he was speaking of the downsizing the ships capability, ship numbers and my colleague from Royal Navy and his First Sea Lord was speaking to me on how much defence cuts coming their way. So, inspite of such restrictions, it is important that we don't downsize but we do right sizing of our forces. I thing that's the key in the maintaining our task and challenges attainable. And you mentioned the cooperation that we need to adopt in handling through

trust and cooperation should be built over many years. This had been built over many years. We need to progress on that. If somebody is going to destabilise, for what ever the reasons, through competition than cooperation, then we are not going in the right direction. Building relations is crucial. Learning from friends is important and you very rightly said no country can have the resources on the task to do it alone. We need cooperation and I, with that note, thank all the navies that cooperated with the Sri Lanka Navy to achieve the peace that we are enjoying today.

There were willing agencies which came forward when we needed the most important help. My Deputy Chief of Staff, Admiral Weerasekara who is at the moment commanding the Northern Naval Command gave insight to what we have gone through. And his highlight was the fact that the launching pads were critical in any event. And the way forward is to plug the launching pads. As I mentioned in the morning at times we say the first line of Defence is the Navy around the coastal line or the territorial waters. No, perhaps first line of Defence lies far away. The potential brewing towards maritime terrorism by Non State Actors is something that we all need to be mindful of. It is that potential that is available away from your shores in a different form disguised and camouflaged, helped by various agencies, is what is threatening most of us today. Even long distance weapons are with terror groups. That potential has to be taken care of. So, in that context, I need to change my course of my concluding remarks to a subject that I discussed at a very senior forum this morning. Then potential is brewing in many places in what ever the country. It may be the Diaspora, belonging to various other countries in large numbers propagating atrocities in other country. If they consider their adopted countries, migrated countries to be their safe heaven the system must address this. They are not propagating anything good. They are propagating criminal acts, through non-state actors. Unfortunately, they use some of the foreign soil to launch their, what ever the atrocities. Even if they target other countries like mine, it destabilizes your own system. It will not do any good to you. If it strengthens your system well you can accept that. It doesn't strengthen, it only destabilises. When you have such systems in your countries they break your decorum, the peace, the tranquillity that you have in your country, you have to think of this seriously, You have much better things to do. So I take this opportunity to convey this to our friends. So that you keep your relevant authorities appraised of the repercussions and grand realities. Don't let anyone of our soils be used to destabilize another country or another system. We almost lost our country. As I told in the morning, had

that Humanitarian Operation not taken place, had our country succumbed to pressure, we wouldn't be talking in this forum.

My good friend from Australia, Chief of the Royal Australian Navy talking of Laws at Sea has struck a very good cord. We have, unfortunately some countries who have not yet ratified the UNCLOS. Yet I understand these are progressing at the legislative level and moving towards ratification. When in Newport - Rhode Island Last year, I proposed and Admiral Muduma from South Africa supported it, and explore whether we could re-visit the laws. This Symposium should have pressurized the UN to re-visit the UNCLOS. They could appoint a committee. But, as Australian Chief said, the international tribunal for UNCLOS is far away from being a reality. Recommendation is for your domestic Laws be shaped to tackle an international situation, like when Pirates are apprehended; your Laws provide a system to handle a foreigner. So in that sense that is the way forward. We are struck with no real law to apply at sea and no one to make a judgement. Judgement is individual. So Russel, Thank you very much for your effort. And you made the forum share your valuable experience.

My friend from Philippine spoke with experience. Your Disaster Management. The four points, Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Rehabilitation. Mitigation, I consider is a very important aspect because some time not only national disasters, there are man made. Negligence create chaos. So mitigation and preparedness. Of course to respond all these we need resources, need money. You have to acquire infrastructure, capability to respond to. You rightly said Sea Lift and Training and Sharing of Resources. I remember in the Galle Dialogue, Admiral Nirmal Verma mentioned of the importance of having a Regional Resource sharing system. When you have a disaster you go to those, who can help you, where the resources are. And if such resources are identified regionally and sub regionally, as long distances can't always be bridged overnight. But for the Sri Lankan Tsunami, it was bridged. Some people flew in some distance, so it is critically important in handling disaster management. There are many questions and many answers regarding piracy from my Maldivian friend and Iranian questions to not to have safe heavens for piracy and illegal activity. I would like to leave a little thought about this piracy, answer to this piracy problem, Even in Abu Dhabi, I mentioned this, we have propagated the Onboard Security formula to counter piracy through the UN. And just a out of the box thought about piracy. How to counter it? What about a blockade around Somalia with multinational Navies? We narrow the

distances that they can travel. It is because nobody is stopping them from leaving their shore line or the coast to venture out to the Sea Routes of Communication. UN can muster a force for coalition forces, get to the place where the trouble is, nearest that you can go to, and stop them spreading them out. Narrow down the threat.

So onboard security and also a blockade is a possibly, a good answer we have. I know multinational forces, individual Navies are patrolling these waters with many number of vessels. You know how much it cost you to maintain a frigate or a destroyer for 10 days at sea. Enormous amount of money. So it is in that context, I see the importance to narrow it down to a smaller area otherwise it could spread all over. Some agencies are now propagating private security on board. That is not a very healthy trend. To have legalized privately armed men onboard. They are resorting to these methods because they are helpless. They want to save their ships from pirates. We need to give a solution as those who control the seas.

Having taken on all this factors, I leave you with the thought that most important thing as friends is to keep engaged, keep communicating and formulate strategies to find solution to the problems. This type of discussions, deliberations are critically important. But finally what matter is sharing of information which is critical to one another, actionable intelligence, and Navies must get together, avoid at times bureaucracies institution to institution. As we do with some of the Navies in and around us, I could speak to the colleagues of regional Navies within minutes around Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and I have done even to far away places in Canada, I have spoken to Admiral McFadden when I previously had a situation, a ship was heading to Canada. I have spoken to Russel and to get his advice. There should be communication with the approval of the government so that we actually can share our information. And, mainly we are supposed to be the nearest to our decision makers. At times we agree our politicians don't agree. Sometimes they have other considerations. In that context, it is very important that we try to convince our authorities that the situation got to be handled on ground as we the ones who are required to respond. As my good friend from Bangladesh said, we are an instrument for the government. With that I really thank, the two moderators from the French Navy and the Bangladesh Navy. And all the participants for honouring Sri Lanka and being here with us today. And I will be failing in my duty if I do not share the participating countries, as you all have met, I was very fortunate to see that there was a Batch Get-together yesterday after 30 years. How many years Susith, after 30 years. The Admiral from Nigeria has done the course

with Deputy Chief of Staff and that batch has about 5 Admirals in that batch, in India in 1981. So they met. So that is the unity that is the personal contact, where you could lift the phone and these personal relationships take long way in final decision making.

So Vice Admiral Russell Crane for Australia, Vice Admiral Zahair Uddin Ahamed from Bangladesh Navy, Naval Staff Brigadier Ibrahim Schin Al Muharrakh, Commander of the UAE Naval Forces, Brigadier Gen Zakakariyya Mansoor, Commandant Coast Guard of Maldives and the visiting Heads of delegates from Thailand Admiral Soopakorn Booranadiloak, and from France, Vice Admiral Marin Gillier, Vice Admiral Maresetio from Indonesia, Vice Admiral Oleg V. Burtsev of Russia, Rear Admiral Wei Xueyi from China, Rear Admiral AK Chawla from India, Rear Admiral Gholam Reza Khadembigham from Islamic Republic of Iran Naval Forces, Rear Admiral James Bamidele Oladimeji from Nigeria, Rear Admiral Jose Luise M. Alano from Philippines, Rear Admiral Robert William Higgs from South Africa, Rear Admiral Ron Horton from USA, Commodore Peter Ellis from Canada, Commodore Paul Bennett from UK, Colonel Chua Meng Seng from Singapore, and the Other visiting Commanding officers of Ships. Commanding officers are not here, but I have great privilege to announce that Sri Lanka being honoured with Naval Ships from Bangladesh Navy, China, two vessels from India, including a tall ship, from Iran, from Pakistan, Russia and Thailand and we will be privileged to meet the Indian and Pakistan Naval Chief this evening joining our group. So it is gentlemen, excellencies, SLN feels very proud to have been honoured by you in this fashion.

60 years of our Navy, we have come a long way. You heard it from the Chief Guest today how important this cooperation to continue and he gave the ground reality in handling situations internationally. So I expect you to take back this thought that we have used and deliberated here to put to good use, then we are comfortable and we are in better position tomorrow than today, if this effort to be a successful effort. We need to engage and practice what is possible on ground

**(Brief on rest of the functions)**

I have a little gift to mark this special occasion. A Souvenir for having participated for the head of delegations and the chiefs in our effort. May I kindly request you to accept this and I will come to you to give the gift.

**(Distribution of Souvenirs)**

May I now conclude this symposium by thanking everybody who supported the effort of this symposium. Many helped outside the navy, the contributors, sponsors, the media and consider my own team lead by my Chief of Staff and for the symposium my Director General Operations, he headed that committee and with his able staff, the Operation Department, I am sure you will be satisfied that we have fulfilled our obligations and efforts in having this symposium.

Thank you - Come gain.