



## INDIA FOUNDATION

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# ECOLOGY | ECONOMY | EPIDEMIC

DECEMBER 4-5, 2021

ABU DHABI, UAE





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# ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The world today is grappling with the ill effects of a global pandemic. While nations are losing citizens and dealing with health challenges, economic challenges are no less devastating. It takes years for countries to rebuild themselves in the aftermath of such losses. However, how will individual economies survive if such impacts were to be felt every decade? Such is the magnitude of the dangers posed by climate change. Incessant burning of fossil fuels and use of oil is leading to a more rapid rise in average global temperatures. Growth of population, changing pattern of lifestyle, over-exploitation of resources and ever-increasing emission of greenhouse gases is disrupting the global ecological balance. Large scale urbanisation, crop intensive farming too are adding to the problem.

Following the trend of disruption, the consequences of changing climatic conditions too are not uniform. While small island nations, coastal regions and low-lying countries are facing the threat of extinction with the possibility of submergence in the next half a century, warming of air is leading to drought-like conditions and consequently causing bushfires. Changing fishing patterns are posing threats to the welfare of the fisherfolk community and a shift away from conventional sources of energy production to more non-conventional ones is realigning diplomatic realities.



To discuss and deliberate on these issues, India Foundation is organising the 5th Indian Ocean Conference – IOC 2021, in United Arab Emirates (UAE). The theme of IOC 2021 was “Ecology, Economy, Epidemic”.

**ECOLOGY:** Discussion on ensuring sustainable use of marine resources, effect of climate change on littoral & island nations, mitigating the effects of natural disasters, green energy solutions for sustainable future, protecting marine environment and reducing the impact of marine pollution in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

**ECONOMY:** Discussion on economic recovery and growth in the emerging markets and developing countries of the IOR post COVID-19, critical importance of trade routes in Indian Ocean, renewables as the new currency for Indian Ocean energy security, fostering greater economic cooperation in the IOR.

**EPIDEMIC:** Discussion on Impact of COVID-19 on Countries of the IOR, global fault lines and vulnerabilities of the healthcare system, socio-economic fallouts, regional cooperation and future challenges, cooperation in public health as a tool of diplomacy, espousing innovation in healthcare management.





## DAY 1 | DECEMBER 4, 2021

### PRE CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS -

PRE - CONFERENCE  
WORKSHOP ON  
ECONOMY

PRE - CONFERENCE  
WORKSHOP ON  
ECOLOGY



- INAUGURAL SESSION
- DINNER ADDRESS
- WELCOME DINNER

# INAUGURAL

# SESSION



**H.E GOTABAYA  
RAJAPAKSA**

President, Sri Lanka;  
Chair, Organising Committee,  
Indian Ocean Conference



“

Countries across the region and the world at large must work together to solve problems that affect nations whether in terms of epidemic, economy or ecology.

”

“

No one country can safeguard the resilience and security of the Indian Ocean Region alone, we must continue to pool in resources and strengthen regional partnerships.

”

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## **FAISAL NASEEM**

Vice President, Maldives



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**REAR ADMIRAL (RETIRED)  
JOSAIA VOREQE  
BAINIMARAMA,**  
Prime Minister, Fiji



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“ We are of different sizes, we stand at different levels of development, we have different geographies, prospects, priorities and challenges for economic recovery but it is clear that we stand our best chance of truly transformative and sustainable recovery by working together. ”

14

“

We are now entering a world of greater plurilateralism, one that recognizes the shortcomings of multilateralism, the limits of bilateralism and the untenability of unilateralism from whichever quarter.

”

15

## **S JAISHANKAR**

External Affairs Minister, India;  
Vice-Chair, Organising Committee,  
Indian Ocean Conference



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**SAYYID BADR BIN HAMAD  
BIN HAMOOD AL BUSAIDI**

Foreign Minister, Oman;  
Vice-Chair, Organising Committee,  
Indian Ocean Conference



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“

For Oman, the biggest component in response to climate change is diversification of the economy and the IO as a secure environment for free trade will facilitate innovation, maximize economic development and diversification.

”

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“

The UAE and countries of the Indian Ocean region have been bound together by strong and long standing ties ranging from trade to tourism and investments to culture. Ultimately, we recognise that mutual prosperity depends heavily on the strength of these ties.

”

## **AHMED ALI AL SAYEGH**

Minister of State, UAE;  
Vice-Chair, Organising Committee,  
Indian Ocean Conference



# “ DINNER ADDRESS ”



## CONDOLEEZZA RICE

Former Secretary of State, USA



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“

Each one of the pillars of Ecology, Economy and Epidemic will need real solutions if we are to meet the challenge.

”

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# WELCOME DINNER









DAY 2 | DECEMBER 5, 2021

SPECIAL PLENARY

- PLENARY 1
- PLENARY 2
- PLENARY 3
- PLENARY 4



## SPECIAL PLENARY



**VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN**

Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
Singapore;  
Vice Chair, Organising Committee,  
Indian Ocean Conference



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**RANIL WICKREMESINGHE**

Former Prime Minister, Sri Lanka;  
Member, Organising  
Committee, Indian Ocean  
Conference



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“

For countries in the Indian Ocean region, travel, tourism, maritime transport, fisheries and seafood production are key drivers of economic growth and recovery. A sustainable blue economy will support the UN's (United Nations) SDG 14 (Sustainable Development Goal 14) on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources, and the global goals on poverty, jobs, resilient communities, and climate change.

— **VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN** ”

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore;  
Vice Chair, Organising Committee,  
Indian Ocean Conference





“

The entanglement of great power rivalry in the Indian ocean is removing the focus on the public health short falls, digital inequalities, education disparities, unemployment and social fragmentation in some of our countries.

— **RANIL WICKREMESINGHE**

Former Prime Minister, Sri Lanka;  
Member, Organising  
Committee, Indian Ocean Conference

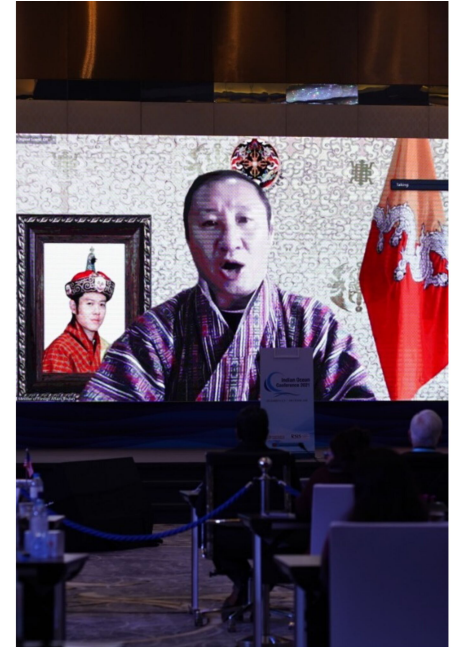
”

# PLENARY 1





**G L PEIRIS**  
Foreign Minister, Sri Lanka



**TANDI DORJI**  
Foreign Minister, Bhutan

“

We have finite, limited resources, but we find ourselves compelled to utilise various substantial sections of resources for the purpose of debts repayment, that leaves us with decimals to grapple with the urgent problems of our country.

**G L PEIRIS —**

Foreign Minister, Sri Lanka

”





“

The Covid- crisis impacts maritime logistics and transports, this impacts the economy of island states. This means we need to work together through an ocean of graphic research and knowledge of the maritime domain to reduce the ecological risks.

— **LEON JEAN RICHARD RAKOTONIRINA**  
Defence Minister, Madagascar”



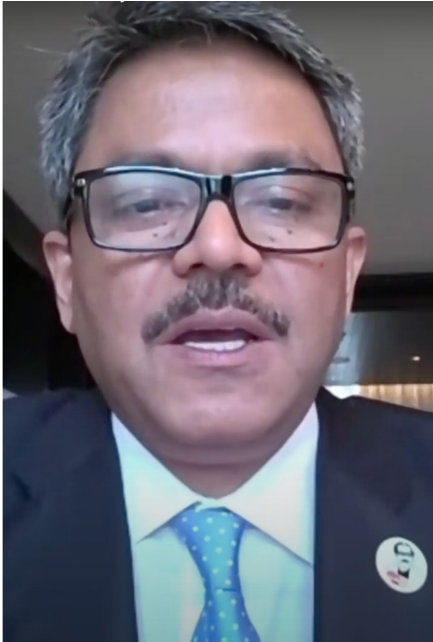
Considering the way economies are linked to the ocean, a strategic partnership between different actors around the world against climate catastrophes is urgent.

— **TANDI DORJI**  
Foreign Minister, Bhutan



# PLENARY 2





**SHAHRIAR ALAM**

State Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
Bangladesh

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**HOUNG BORITH**

Minister to the PM and Standing  
Sec of State, Cambodia



**OMARY KIPANGA**

Deputy Minister, Tanzania

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“

Indian ocean region is of paramount significance for regional security, connectivity, peace and prosperity. Geographical location and geomorphological conditions of the Indian Ocean region have made the region one of the most vulnerable ones, it constitutes the lifeline of our globalised world providing very vital sea links of communication and feeding Asia's largest economies.

— **SHAHRIAR ALAM**

State Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
Bangladesh

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“

The pandemic has abundantly shown us how world abilities in health system implications for delivering health services. The transition from current pandemic to endemic is possible but requires a long and collective effort nationally, regionally and globally.

— **OUCH BORITH**

Minister to the PM and Standing  
Sec of State, Cambodia

”

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“

All countries, including Tanzania have been impacted by the Covid- 19. Sectors being affected are maritime transport, tourism, fisheries sector, and the other sectors closely linked with tourism.

— **OMARY KIPANGA**

Deputy Minister, Tanzania

”



# PLENARY 3

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**NGUYEN QUOC DZUNG**  
Vice Foreign Minister, Vietnam



**HONDA TARO**  
Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign  
Affairs, Japan

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**BHARAT RAJ PAUDYAL**  
Foreign Secretary, Nepal



**WASEQA AYESHA KHAN**  
Member of Parliament, Bangladesh

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“

The vast Indian ocean is an important region for realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” which Japan has been advocating... As the international community faces immense changes and cocondrums associated with COVID-19, it is a free and open order based on the rule of law that will bring peace and stability to the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

— **HONDA TARO**

Parliamentary Vice Minister for  
Foreign Affairs, Japan

”





“

The Indian ocean with abundant resources has been the source of prosperity of the coastal communities since ancient times... There is an imperative and urgent need to develop extensive and profound awareness of the significance of oceans to sustainable development and economic recovery.

— **NGUYEN QUOC DZUNG**

Vice Foreign Minister, Vietnam

”

“

Climate induced disasters have engulfed coastal states and small islands as well as the mountains. This intrinsic linkage should be well considered while pursuing the goal for healthy oceans as embodied by UN SDG 14.

— **BHARAT RAJ PAUDYAL**

Foreign Secretary, Nepal

”





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“

The pandemic and the climate emergency are both global phenomena, therefore necessitating coordinated global response... Let the best practices positively impact our shared sustainable future in the Indian ocean region.

— **WASEQA AYESHA KHAN**  
Member of Parliament, Bangladesh

”

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# PLENARY 4

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**DONALD LU**

Assistant Secretary of State, USA

**AUSTRALIA**



**MEHMET SEYFETTIN EROL**

President, ANKASAM, Turkey



**JENNIFER LARSON**

A/Deputy Assistant Secretary, US State  
Department



**THAILAND**



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“

Greater efforts are required from the global community specially from the West in terms of supporting both adaptation to climate and also climate change prevention... A lot of work is being done around the world to help developing countries. Without the support of the developing world, there is no way that climate targets can be reached.

— **DONALD LU**  
Assistant Secretary of State, USA

”

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“

What happens in the Indian ocean region resonates everywhere in the world, that's why Australia seeks an Indo-Pacific region that is open, inclusive and resilient, underpinned by rules, norms and respect for sovereignty.

— AUSTRALIA

”





“

Indian ocean can be described as the heartland or Eurasia of the seas in terms of geopolitics... The potential of different cultures and values that come together specifically in India and the UAE shouldn't be ignored.

— **MEHMET SEYFETTIN EROL**  
President, ANKASAM, Turkey

”

“

The support for a free and open Indo-Pacific has enabled increased American investment in the region, more fair and open trade relationships, and has promoted reforms that have increased prosperity for Americans and people across the region.

— **JENNIFER LARSON**

A/Deputy Assistant Secretary, US State Department

”



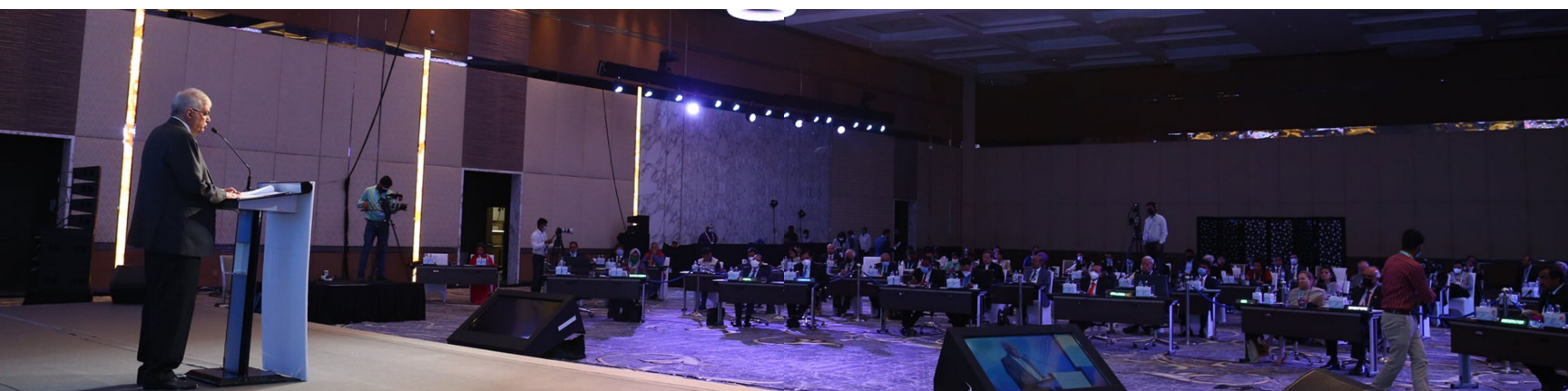
“

Thailand attaches great importance to promoting the right balance between the utilization and preservation of marine environment through the concept of blue economy.

— THAILAND

”









## Pre-Conference Workshop on Economy





**CAPTAIN ALOK BANSAL**

Director, India Foundation;  
Organising Secretary, Indian Ocean  
Conference



**ASHOK SAJJANHAR**

Former Ambassador, India



**ASHA JADEJA MOTWANI**

Founder, Motwani Jadeja Foundation,  
USA



**MANJEET KRIPLANI**

Co-Founder and Executive Director,  
Gateway House, India

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**ROHAN GUNARATNE**

Advisor, Institute for National Security  
Studies, Sri Lanka

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Pre-Conference Workshop  
on Economy





**VICE ADMIRAL SHEKHAR  
SINHA**

Member, Board of Trustees, India  
Foundation;  
Member, Organising Committee, Indian  
Ocean Conference



**VICE ADMIRAL ANUP  
SINGH**

Former C-in-C, Eastern Naval  
Command, Indian Navy, India



**LT GEN ARUN SAHNI**

Former GOC-in-C, Indian Army,  
India



**PHIL MIDLAND**

US Navy Retd, USA



**JAGJEET SAREEN**

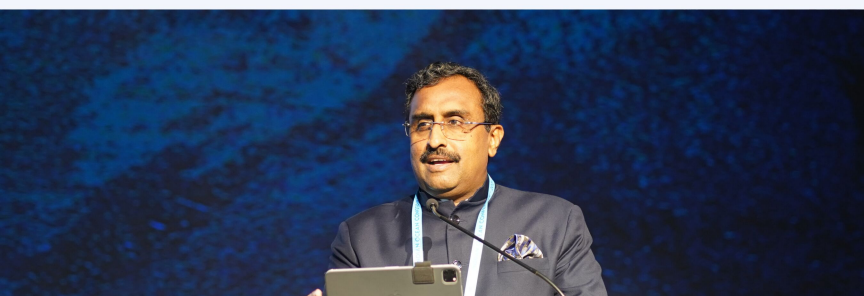
Assistant Director-General (Strategy),  
ISA, India

# CONFERENCE REPORT



The [5th Indian Ocean Conference \(IOC 2021\)](#) was organised by India Foundation in association with its partner organisations from [UAE, Singapore and Sri Lanka on December 4-5, 2021 in Abu Dhabi, UAE](#). Considering the tumultuous time that the world is going through and the challenges posed by the Covid pandemic, the Conference was held in a hybrid mode. Over a span of two days, the Conference was addressed by [37 speakers from 21 countries](#). The speakers comprised of a [Head of State](#), a [Deputy Head of State](#), a [Head of Government](#), [14 Ministers](#), a [Former Prime Minister](#) amongst other diplomats and academics and attended by over 200 delegates.

The proceedings of the 5th Indian Ocean Conference commenced with two workshops. The workshop on the importance of the Indian Ocean economy was chaired by Captain Alok Bansal, Director, India Foundation; Organising Secretary, Indian Ocean Conference. The panel comprised of Ms Manjeet Kriplani, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Gateway House, India; Mr Ashok Sajjanhar, Former Ambassador, India; Mr Rohan Gunaratne, Advisor, Institute for National Security Studies, Sri Lanka; and Ms Asha Jadeja Motwani, Founder, Motwani Jadeja Foundation, USA.



The workshop on the importance of the Indian Ocean ecology was chaired by [Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha, Member, Board of Trustees, India Foundation; Member, Organising Committee, Indian Ocean Conference](#). The panel comprised of Mr Phil Midland, US Navy Retd, USA; Vice Admiral Anup Singh, Former C-in-C, Eastern Naval Command, Indian Navy, India; Mr Jagjeet Sareen, Assistant Director-General (Strategy), ISA, India; and Lt Gen Arun Sahni, Former GOC-in-C, Indian Army, India.

The inaugural session commenced with welcome remarks by [Ram Madhav, Member, Governing Council, India Foundation](#). Mr Madhav highlighted the historic, economic, socio-political and cultural relevance of the Indian Ocean region. He regarded the Indian Ocean Conference as a platform for policy makers who shape the future of the people of the region and called for a cooperative and collaborative attitude for addressing the challenges.

His Excellency Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh, Minister of State, UAE and Vice-Chair, Organising Committee, Indian Ocean Conference, focused on the thematic shift from traditional and non-traditional security challenges to identifying the shifting global dynamics and fraying of the international order as potential threat to regional and global stability by the world leaders. He stressed on the commitment of the government of the United Arab Emirates towards unifying regional efforts and working with partners to tackle the socio-economic impact of the pandemic and ensure that assistance is provided to all the developing partners and communities.

Delivering the Inaugural address of the Conference, His Excellency Gotabaya Rajapaksa, President, Sri Lanka and Chair, Organising Committee, Indian Ocean Conference, appreciated the sophistication and resources of humanity to actively identify, inhibit and prevent the widespread devastation of a global epidemic before it was too late. He highlighted the relevance of the region for the island nation of Sri Lanka and recognised the need for a common broader understanding of collective actions that the nations in the region can undertake for resolving the common issues. He assured the commitment of Sri Lanka to cooperate in any regional mechanism that intends to meaningfully accomplish such an aim.

His Excellency Rear Admiral (Retired) Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister, Fiji, highlighted the interconnectedness of the three factors in the theme of the conference - ecology, economy and the epidemic, and the need for a holistic approach to regard it as one problem. He brought to focus the urgency of engineering sustainable development in the face of climate change especially for island nations such as Fiji. He reiterated the commitment of the government of Fiji towards building a green and blue economy, one that is based on a steep sustainable trajectory.



In his remarks, His Excellency Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Oman, and Vice-Chair, Organising Committee, Indian Ocean Conference, emphasised on the historical, social and economic engagement of Oman with the countries situated in the Indian Ocean Region. Highlighting the importance of the blue economy for the long-term development of countries in the region and beyond, he reasserted that it is based on the principle of sustainability. He regarded the well-being of the marine environment, the threat of climate change and future prosperity of the people of the Indian Ocean region to be deeply interconnected and called for collective actions in addressing them.

His Excellency S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister, India; Vice-Chair, Organising Committee, Indian Ocean Conference, commenced the keynote address with a stock-taking of the big picture with regards to the factors relevant for the developments in the Indian Ocean Region such as the changing of the American strategic posture, the rise of China, and the others. He emphasized on the emerging role of middle powers, stronger practice of regionalism, greater localization and arrangements of pragmatism, which would imply more activities and stronger cooperation amongst the resident players in the Indian Ocean Region to rebuild the organic unity in the region.

Ms Condoleezza Rice, Former Secretary of State, USA, regarded climate change as one of the most important challenges in the current times. She called for moving forward with synergistic solutions at the local, state and global levels to create a carbon-neutral world. She emphasised on the need for real solutions of ecology.

Addressing the Conference virtually on the morning of Day 2 of the Conference, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore; Vice Chair, Organising Committee, Indian Ocean Conference spoke about the significance of the theme of the Conference to contemporary times in the larger picture of geopolitical realities. Elaborating on the theme, Dr Balakrishnan spoke at length about the steps taken by the Government of Singapore in containing the pandemic while working on phased economic recovery; the challenges of over-warming of the waters of the Indian Ocean and the role being played developed countries by enhancing climate finance to help build resilience of the developing countries.



Shri G L Peiris, Foreign Minister, Sri Lanka spoke of the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic to the Sri Lankan economy and the populace at large and elaborated on the practices adopted by the government in dealing with it.

His Excellency Dhoirir Dhoulkamal, Foreign Minister, Comoros, stressed on the blue economy being a catalyst for economic growth, especially for countries that are highly dependent on the ocean and reasserted the need for logistical and financial security for such countries. He called for international cooperation in regional economic recovery and the special focus on the vulnerables such as the women and youth while formulating the developmental policies in the post-pandemic world.

His Excellency Leon Jean Richard Rakotonirina, Defence Minister, Madagascar, in his address highlighted the importance of the Indian Ocean Region for the economy and society of Madagascar. After reflecting on the recent developments following the outbreak of the pandemic, he stressed on the need to relaunch mature cooperation by all the stakeholders in the region for sustainable development.

His Excellency Tandi Dorji, Foreign Minister, Bhutan, emphasised on the global challenges arising out of climate change. After highlighting the carbon negative status of Bhutan, he called for deliberations on the need for a stronger multilateral cooperation by all the countries to fight the perils of climate change and regarded the Indian Ocean Conference as one such platform to engage in meaningful dialogue.

In his address, His Excellency Shahriar Alam, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh, stressed on the need for the countries to aim for sustainable low carbon economic growth while focusing on overall economic recovery. He regarded the Indian Ocean Region as key for food security and engine for economic growth, not just for the littoral countries but also the global audience. He called for multi-stakeholder partnership in ensuring the balance between utilisation and protection of the oceanic resources.



His Excellency Ouch Borith, Minister to the PM and Standing Secretary of State, Cambodia, reflected on Cambodia's strategy for dealing with the perils of the pandemic. He stressed on the several challenges faced by the countries and called for collectively curating sustainable solutions and regarded promoting green development as one of the foundational pillars to support a long-term socio-economic development.

Reflecting on the relevance of the Indian Ocean Region for Tanzania, His Excellency Omary Kipanga, Deputy Minister for Education, Tanzania, highlighted the blue economy policy of the country and strategy that is being formulated. He reasserted the commitment of the government of Tanzania to work with regional stakeholders in furthering the case of promoting the blue economy while also protecting the environment, the ocean and the oceanic resources.

His Excellency Honda Taro, Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Japan, highlighted the importance of the Indian Ocean region and the need for rule based order in the Indo-Pacific. He focused on multilateral cooperation to ensure the need for a free, open, fair, inclusive and stable trade and investment environment in the region and also emphasized the importance of building resilience against infectious diseases.

Regarding the Indian Ocean's critical sea lanes as the lifeline of international trade and gateways linking world continents, His Excellency Nguyen Quoc Dzung, Vice Foreign Minister, Vietnam, focused on the blue economy potentials of the region as the source of prosperity of the coastal communities and beyond. He emphasized that the ASEAN countries are willing and ready to share best practices and promote cooperation on issues of common interest with the Indian Ocean countries.

Highlighting the challenges imposed by COVID-19, climate change and economic disruptions, Mr Bharat Raj Paudyal, Foreign Secretary, Nepal emphasised on the importance of the theme of the conference being equally relevant for the coastal and the landlocked countries. Focusing on the interconnectedness of the countries, he acknowledged that the problems of today transcends the borders. He called for urgent collective actions to grapple with the gravity of the challenges.

Ms Waseqa Ayesha Khan, Member of Parliament, Bangladesh, reasserted the position and perspective of the government of Bangladesh with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate emergency. She stressed on the need for collective actions and sharing of best practices by the countries in the region on recovering from the economic downturn and facing the climate emergency together.

Reflecting on the disruptions caused by the pandemic on every sphere of living, **Mr Donald Lu, Assistant Secretary of State, USA** regarded international partnership as the strongest weapon while facing the pandemic. He highlighted the various initiatives taken by the American government to supply vaccines in other partner countries such as in Africa. He called for sharing of information, expertise and the limited resources in order to establish a strong global partnership.

**Ms Jennifer Larson, Deputy Assistant Secretary, US State Department**, stressed on the importance placed by the government of the United States of America on not just the bilateral relationship but also on the plural lateralism of the region. She called for enhancing interconnectivity and resilient supply chain mechanisms to withstand the disruptions caused by events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. She stressed on the American pursuit of ensuring free, open and rule-based Indo-Pacific.

The **representative of Australia** focused on the importance of the Indian Ocean Region for Australia, particularly Australia's engagement in the region. He emphasised that Australia is an Indo-Pacific country and not an Asia-Pacific country, a formulation earlier used by the country. He reaffirmed the position of Australia that they intend to work towards building a region in which members can resist coercion, fight disinformation, ensure that freedoms of navigation and overflight are respected, creating sustainable livelihoods and protecting the environment.

Highlighting the global challenges such as the pandemic and the looming threats such as environmental degradation and climate change, **Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Thailand in UAE**, affirmed that the Indian Ocean remains at the crossroads of global maritime trade and has great potential to serve as an important venue of cooperation to promote economic growth and recovery in the coming future. He shared the outlook of the government of Thailand in enhancing regional cooperation to tackle common challenges.



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**Mr Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, President, ANKASAM, Turkey**, focused on the rise of Indo-Pacific in the new geopolitics of Asia and the relevance in the Indian Ocean region in this regard. He highlighted the strategic importance of transportation corridors situated in the region in the context of the global geopolitical changes. He emphasised on the need to create new partnerships and arrangements to accelerate the drive of economic recovery and propensity for all.

Summarising the conference deliberations, **Mr Navdeep Singh Suri, Former Ambassador, India; Member, Organising Committee, Indian Ocean Conference**, highlighted the broad agreement of the participating countries on the three Es in the theme of the conference - Ecology, Economy and Epidemic, as the three

most pressing challenges for the Indian Ocean region. He emphasised on the importance placed by the participants on international collaboration and reflected on the relevance of the Indian Ocean Conference in this regard.



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## CHAIR



**H.E. GOTABAYA  
RAJAPAKSA**  
President, Sri Lanka

## VICECHAIR



**S JAISHANKAR**

External Affairs Minister,  
India



**VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN**

Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
Singapore

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## VICECHAIR



**SAYYID BADR BIN HAMAD  
BIN  
HAMOUD AL BUSAIDI**

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Oman



**AHMED ALI AL SAYEGH**

Minister of State, UAE

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## MEMBERS



**RANIL WICKREMESINGHE**

Former Prime Minister,  
Sri Lanka



**SHAHRIAR ALAM**

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs,  
Bangladesh



**RIVA GANGULY DAS**

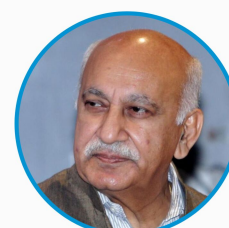
Secretary (East), Ministry of  
External Affairs, India



**SURESH PRABHU**

Member of Parliament,  
India

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**M J AKBAR**

Former Minister of State  
for External Affairs, India

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**NAVDEEP SINGH SURI**

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**GAUTAM BAMBAWALE**

Former Ambassador,  
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**ORGANISING  
SECRETARY**

