

PRESS STATEMENT



REMARKS MADE BY THE RT. HON. WINSTON PETERS, NEW ZEALAND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, following Bilateral Discussions with Hon. Vijitha Herath, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Foreign Employment and Tourism of Sri Lanka.

26 May 2025, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Thank you to Foreign Minister Herath for the warm welcome to Sri Lanka. The New Zealand delegation is delighted to be here to further strengthen the warm relationship between New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

Relations between our countries are long-standing. Our trade dates from the 1860s and sporting connections to the 1920s. New Zealand was one of the first countries to recognise Sri Lanka's independence in 1948.

Our modern relationship is growing, thanks to investments by both countries. We are pleased the establishment of New Zealand's High Commission in Colombo in 2021 was followed by the opening of a Sri Lankan High Commission in Wellington this year. These commitments will enable our trade, cultural and political engagements to grow for mutual benefit.

For nearly 75 years, education has been a pillar of the relationship, starting with the training of Sri Lankan dental nurses in New Zealand under the Colombo Plan. Now we can count over 200 Sri Lankan alumni of New Zealand scholarship programmes.

We are delighted to note further strengthening of these links through cooperation on tourism research between New Zealand's University of Otago and the University of Colombo.

For many years, the New Zealand-Sri Lanka relationship has also encompassed development cooperation aimed at strengthening resilience in vulnerable communities, increasing food security, and contributing to disaster response.

We are proud today to announce another such link, the Sustainable Water and Livelihoods project which will support farming households to improve their health and income generation.

On security, we shared views on the increasingly challenging global environment and the interconnected challenges for development, trade and security in the Indo-Pacific region. We remain committed to our cooperation across immigration, customs, police and defence.

We discussed the growing number of New Zealand companies working with and investing in Sri Lanka or looking to work with Sri Lankan partners.

Many of these collaborations will deliver benefits for Sri Lanka in the tourism, agriculture, and healthcare sectors.

We also discussed the key role government-to-government cooperation between our food safety and border agencies plays to improve food safety standards, reduce red tape at the border, and increase Sri Lanka's market access capabilities.

We reiterated that Sri Lanka's application to accede to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement is very welcome.

We are pleased to confirm that places on short term training courses in trade policy will be offered to Sri Lanka officials under the Manaaki New Zealand Scholarship Programme.

Naturally we discussed our two nations' shared passion for sport and noted the success of the recent tour by the New Zealand men's under 85kg rugby team, playing against Sri Lanka's Tuskers. We look forward to further future battles between New Zealand and Sri Lankan teams on the rugby pitch and the cricket field.

Thank you once again to Foreign Minister Herath, the government, and the people of Sri Lanka for your warm hosting of our delegation.

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