Madam President

Sri Lanka extends its heartfelt gratitude to the President of the General Assembly Ms María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her extraordinary efforts and support to Sri Lanka and indeed to all delegations that extended their condolences and support to the government and people of Sri Lanka at this difficult time when we face an unprecedented challenge. We lean today on the international community and we are overwhelmed by the support extended to us by all member and observer states and their peoples.

Madam President

Sri Lanka is pleased to deliver this statement at this historic moment to commemorate multilateralism at the United Nations. We are proud to collectively serve in an intergovernmental body, that despite its many challenges, has in the past 74 years, demonstrated that multilateralism is the only path to a peaceful world, and that protectionism and isolationism are anachronistic concepts that have no place in a mature and forward looking international order.

We commend you Madam for convening this High Level Meeting, and for your efforts in promoting the three pillars of Sustainable Development, Peace and Security and Human Rights of the United Nations, and we acknowledge the extraordinary work of the Secretary General in this regard, especially at a time when multilateralism is being undermined and threatened in many parts of the world.

We are pleased to align ourselves with the Statement made the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement, to commemorate this inaugural “International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace”. A day that was set aside at the UN following resolution 73/127 (adopted on 12 December 2018). A resolution initiated by the Non Aligned Movement – another intergovernmental body that manifests the collective good that flows from multilateralism.

We must continue to seek ways to promote and strengthen multilateralism and diplomacy in order to reaffirm the faith of all our people in the purposes and principles of the Charter; to advance the three pillars of the United Nations which are interlinked and mutually reinforcing; to reaffirm the importance and relevance of multilateralism and international law; and, to advance the common goal of a lasting and sustained peace through diplomacy.
It is vital that member states forge new and innovative partnerships in order to promote our collective values and ideals, and to do so under the umbrella of multilateralism and a rules-based order. It must be the common responsibility of all member states to strengthen the international order based on the Rule of Law.

[Indeed, if the rule of law is to be strengthened, it must also be based on the principles enshrined in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations: namely the core principles of sovereign equality and non-interference, the prohibition on the threat or use of force and the obligation to settle international disputes peacefully. This can only be achieved through effective multilateralism].

It is also appropriate to recall that the early multilateral treaties negotiated in the early period of the founding of the organization such as the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 and the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties of 1969 laid strong foundations for effective multilateralism in the years ahead.

In this regard, multilateral treaties relating to the global commons, namely; the preservation of the environment, oceans and outer space and instruments on international criminal law cooperation including on suppression of International Terrorism, is a reflection of the spirit of cooperation among states that underscores these treaty obligations.

The diversity of systems represented by Member States serves as an opportunity to find innovative solutions in maintaining and advancing the rule of law as a tool for sustainable development, peace and security, and the realization of human rights. In this context the commitment of Member States to multilateral treaties and conventions, can only help to solidify international norms, and advance collective responses to global problems.

Threats to multilateralism often emanate from politically motivated fear mongering. The fear of globalization – an inevitable phenomenon that has taken place for thousands of years, and has only served to enrich societies and nations, surges in migration, among others, have fed into a suspicion of multilateralism and fuelled protectionism, populism and unilaterality.

We must therefore work together to allay those fears and address frustrations in meaningful ways that allow the dividends of multilateralism to reach all our peoples at all levels.

To that end we must support this our United Nations and its many agencies and each other, as we strive to implement the 2030 agenda, address gender inequalities, alleviate poverty, and speedily address humanitarian concerns. It is our responsibility to demonstrate the relevance of our esteemed body, ever remembering why we were established, and firmly eschewing the brutalities of the past born of isolationism and authoritarianism, while embracing the inclusivity of the future that guarantees peace and prosperity for all.

Thank you