



**Speech by H. E. Jagath Wellawatte, High Commissioner-designate of Sri Lanka to the Republic of Cyprus on the occasion of the Presentation of Credentials to His Excellency Nikos Christodoulides
President of the Republic of Cyprus
6th November 2023**

Good Morning

His Excellency Mr. President,
Ladies, and Gentlemen,

I am honored today to be officially accredited at the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to the Republic of Cyprus.

Please let me firstly convey on behalf of His Excellency Ranil Wickremasinghe, President of Sri Lanka, the warmest greetings and a message of sincere friendship to you and all the people of Cyprus.

Sri Lanka has a long history of democracy, good relations with neighboring countries and is guided since its independence, in 1948, by the principle of non-alignment: its foreign policy is based on neutrality in international affairs.

The country has made progress in socioeconomic development. The President of my country, His Excellency Ranil Wickremesinghe has committed to a new economic and social reform agenda with the objectives of the development of the country.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Cyprus and Sri Lanka in 1963, our relations have always been cordial and in the optic of a mutual cooperation in many international organizations and fora, such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth, especially on matters of principle.

According to official reports, there are around **6000 Sri Lankans** legally living in Cyprus and it seems to me that they are all very well integrated in the society: as you may be aware, they are mainly employed as domestic helpers, in hotel and tourism industry, in construction and agriculture, and make a significant contribution to both economies.

Furthermore, Cyprus is an attractive destination for Sri Lankan migrant workers and I believe that the labour relations between the two countries could be strengthened through a bilateral agreement for the mutual benefit of the both countries.

Although the High Commission of Sri Lanka is based in Italy, I am closely monitoring the conditions of the Sri Lankans in Cyprus and I can definitely affirm that the cooperation extended by the Cypriot authorities on several aspects related to their presence and work in the island is quite remarkable.

Tourism and leisure industry is both for Cyprus and Sri Lanka a shared interest: in Sri Lanka the tourism sector is mainly based on family-run activities that will flourish even more in the next months, as part of the new restructuring plan of the country. It is my intention to promote tourism exchange between the two countries, especially by improving air links, thus benefitting also the increment of current trade relations between our two island countries.

Mr. President,

once again, I wish to convey to you the best wishes from the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka the welfare and prosperity of the Republic of Cyprus.

Thank you.