



Outer Space—

Man's New Frontier

Address by

**HIS EXCELLENCY
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PRESIDENT
of the
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**

VIA SATELLITE FROM COLOMBO

**TO THE
SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE
EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES
OF
OUTER SPACE**

Vienna – 9 August 1982

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Mr. President
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

I send you greetings on the inauguration of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. I send you also, on behalf of all Asians, our warm good wishes for the success of your deliberations in establishing Outer Space, for all time, as mankind's new frontier to be explored and utilised in the interests of humanity.

It is a signal honour to my country, Sri Lanka, that I have been given this opportunity of representing our region in this inaugural broadcast, appropriately via Space Satellite. I speak, however, not only as an Asian, but as a citizen of our Planet.

You are meeting in the twenty-fifth year since the first satellite heralded the Space Age. Man has since taken his

first step on the moon. Two great countries which pioneered Space exploration have symbolized the essential unity of the human race by the linking of hands in Space. Space Technology has taken tremendous strides in the form of unmanned probes to distant planets and the development of re-usable Space Vehicles. Man's knowledge of Space does indeed, literally and metaphorically, encompass a much wider horizon today than it did a quarter century ago. The purpose of this Conference, to my mind, is to ensure that Man's understanding of his place in our universe is also commensurate with his knowledge and his skill.

When the First Conference on Space met in historic Vienna fifteen years ago, the subject of Outer Space was, to many of us, particularly in the Third World, somewhat distant. It was not, I must hasten to add, for lack of interest. We had too many concerns, too many immediate pre-occupations here on Earth. Peoples who awakened to every dawning day as a day of anxiety about the family's next meal or about the health of a loved one, or about a roof over their heads to protect them from the elements on Earth, could not become partners in this new area of human endeavour about which they had little knowledge.

What might be called the physical conquest of Space has added a new dimension to our outlook on life on Earth. That single small step on the moon was indeed a giant leap for mankind. In the last two decades the entire world community, developed and developing alike, has come into

direct physical contact with the promise as well as the problems presented by Man's conquest of Space.

Distinguished Delegates

You are gathered in Vienna at this Conference, significantly designated as UNISPACE-1982, mandated to promote international co-operation in the exploration of Outer Space and its uses. This getting together, I would presume, is not merely for the sharing of knowledge. From his earliest days, civilised Man has sought knowledge and shared it through communication. Knowledge is no doubt a desirable end in itself. If it did not, however, result in improving the quality of human life, all knowledge would be barren and all science would be bereft of any meaning to billions of people on Earth.

This Conference, I would venture to stress, should be about knowledge in the service of Man, about knowledge with understanding. I would wish that the world community could look upon these last two decades of the Twentieth Century as the end of the era of narrow national rivalries and the beginning of an era of true human interdependence. That interdependence must surely mean that the knowledge of Outer Space and its potential, accumulated by the international community in the last two and a half decades, is viewed as a pool of human experience, as a tool to be employed in the improvement of people's lives everywhere. ?

In that vision of international life, the poorer nations which have not directly participated in or directly contributed to the conquest of Space cannot remain outsiders; they cannot remain mere spectators of this great adventure which is unfolding before mankind. It is indeed being recognised, although unfortunately not widely enough, that these nations are not really outsiders. As partners in the global economic system, which enabled some nations to advance by leaps and bounds, these poorer nations themselves have contributed to that advance through that partnership. More directly, individual scientists and technologists from the developing world have also contributed to the development of the technologies and the mastery of the skills which made Space exploration possible.

The developing countries will not be satisfied with remaining mere spectators to the march of progress in Space Science and Space Technology. Quite many of them have their own programs—some highly advanced and some only incipient—in the use and development of Space Science and Space Technology. Sri Lanka is no exception. We are committed partners in international co-operation in the use of Space communications. We are, however, like many other nations in the Third World, only in the initial stages of the use of Space Technology, as we are in many other areas of Basic Science.

At the same time, like the other developing nations, we do not intend to remain at that level. That is why I am happy to have seen the fruition, last year, of my objective of

establishing in Colombo, an Institute of Fundamental Studies. The Institute will develop before long as a meeting ground of world scientists of repute, who will pool their scientific knowledge and method not only in the more conventional investigations in Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Astronomy, but also in serious inquiry into philosophical questions such as the Buddha's view of the Physical Universe. We consider this Conference very important and very opportune. The importance which Sri Lanka attaches to it is reflected in the high level delegation which is in Vienna to join you in your work.

The development of Space Science holds not only positive promise. All of us, Distinguished Delegates, are aware of its pitfalls as well. The potential of satellite technology for destructive uses is the greatest challenge which humanity faces today. We have the word of every astronaut and cosmonaut who looked at Planet Earth from Space, that their first response to this view of our Planet was a profound realisation, not only of its smallness in the vastness of the universe, but also of the oneness of the human condition. The greatest irony of our time is that even with that perception of our human bond, nations could think in terms of using that very same Space, to deny that bond. It would be Man's greatest injustice to Man, Man's greatest insult to Science to view Outer Space as another arena of conflict, another medium of mutual destruction. On behalf of all the Peoples of our World and in the name of all humanity, I voice our profound hope that this Conference will succeed in averting that folly.

This Conference, Ladies and Gentlemen, presents us with an unique opportunity of strengthening the foundations of human interdependence ; of sustaining in action, all the noble ideals of all our Religions, all our Philosophies, all our Civilizations. Let us grasp that opportunity of ensuring for our succeeding generations, a world in which misunderstandings have been overcome and Man is not only the master of his resources but also of his passions. It is our expectation that UNISPACE-1982 will mark the beginning of true interdependence among nations, trust and concord among peoples and Peace on our Planet.

Thank you Mr. President.

REFERENCE

