

SPEECH OF

**HON. P. DHANAPAL,
SPEAKER,
TAMIL NADU LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

in the

**63RD COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE,
DHAKA, BANGLADESH**

**ON
6TH NOVEMBER 2017**

SUB.:

***THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN BUILDING STRONGER TIES WITHIN
THE COMMONWEALTH INCLUDING NEW TRADE ISSUES, VISA ISSUES,
TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, NON-TARIFF RESTRICTIONS, ETC.***

Chairperson of the Executive Committee and President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Hon'ble Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is indeed a great privilege for me to participate in the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference being held at Dhaka, a historical and capital city of Bangladesh .

First of all, I wish to thank Hon. Late Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu **Dr. Puratchi Thalaivi J. Jayalalithaa Amma** for having bestowed on me the honour as Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly for the second consecutive term. Our Hon. Late Chief Minister is a six time Legislator and had been the Chief Minister of our State for a record of four times. Her benevolence, compassion and contribution has been translated into pioneering schemes for the welfare of the people throughout her career, particularly to the Women and the downtrodden. To her, the motto of governance was **“By the people and for the people”**.

As you all are aware, building stronger ties and better understanding among the countries and peoples of the commonwealth has been one of the underlining objectives of the commonwealth. As people's representatives, it falls on our shoulders to promote greater

people-to-people contacts and bring the member-countries closer. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association provides us the apt platform to debate, discuss and build consensus on issues of our common concern. Given the common challenges facing our countries in this closely integrated global economic landscape, we must come together and make collective efforts to address them for the benefit of our peoples.

It needs no reiteration that we, in the Commonwealth understand the importance of international trade as a powerful tool of development, and, accordingly, have consistently been advocating for a multilateral trading system that ensures effective participation of all countries, especially the small and least developed countries. The World Trade Organization has, in fact, evolved as a successful platform for negotiation of trade agreements based on the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and inclusiveness. As the Doha Development Agenda has given a new dimension to the WTO and to the International Trade architecture, we must work towards concluding the Doha round of negotiation at the earliest. However, as you all might be aware, efforts are being made to bring the new trade issues such as e-commerce, investment facilitation, and small and medium enterprises known as SMEs, for negotiations at the WTO. We must resolutely oppose them and keep the focus on the development of the Doha Agenda.

As regards e-commerce, we must acknowledge that different countries are at different stages of development, accordingly, the digital divide that exist between the countries, particularly the developing and the least developed countries on the one side and the developed countries on the other, must be taken into account. Thus, we believe, since many of our countries in the Commonwealth are still not at the same level of development as developed economies are, the issues relating to e-commerce may be taken up at an appropriate time. On the front of investment facilitation, we may recall the July Framework of 2004 which mandates that investment will not be a part of the Doha Work Programme. Since the Doha Round is still underway, we believe, it is premature to push the investment related issues at this stage. Besides, regulation on investment also involves measures which are specific to national circumstances of an economy. As far as SMEs are concerned, it is an important sector of many developing economies like India. Given our stage of development and the state of economy, we need to be clear about how the rules

benefit our SMEs. As more deliberations on such issues required to be done before these are brought to the negotiating table, I am sure, you all will agree that we the members of Commonwealth, must stress on taking forward the Doha Development Agenda and make all efforts to conclude the Round.

Recognizing that travel and tourism industry makes a significant contribution to the economies of the Commonwealth countries and has great potential to flourish, we in India have formulated a e-visa regime which covers majority of the Commonwealth countries, to facilitate travel and tourism and covers medical visitors and business travelers as well. Such measures, I am sure, will bring our people closer and help build mutual cooperation and strengthen our ties within the commonwealth.

Thank you,

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