

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

June 10, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington D.C., 20520

The Honorable Hayashi Yoshimasa
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Government of Japan
2-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku,
Tokyo 100-8919, Japan

The Honorable Dr. S. Jaishankar
Minister of External Affairs
Government of India
South Block, Central Secretariat,
New Delhi, Delhi 110011, India

The Honorable Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Government of Australia
10 John McEwen Cres,
Barton ACT 2600, Australia

Dear Secretary Blinken, Minister Yoshimasa, Minister Jaishankar, and Minister Wong:

I write to congratulate you on a successful Quad Leaders' Summit and to encourage the Quad, as it continues to develop as a functional part of the Indo-Pacific architecture, to take a more proactive role in addressing Sri Lanka's political and economic crisis. Last month's Quad meeting in Tokyo produced tangible results, from boosting vaccine capacity to combating climate change to coordinating activities in cybersecurity, space, and other critical and emerging technologies.

In particular, the newly launched Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) is an important step for the region to build joint maritime capacity and information sharing. Similarly, the launch of the 13-nation Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) – which I was pleased to see all four Quad members are participating in – is a good first step toward deepening economic integration between like-minded allies and partners in the region. There remains strong bipartisan and bicameral support in the U.S. Congress for the Quad.

But there is much more the Quad can and should do in the Indian Ocean neighborhood, starting with Sri Lanka. The origins of the Quad lie in the collective response by our four nations to the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. In the spirit of that tradition, today's iteration of the Quad can lead the way in working to avoid an economic implosion in Sri Lanka that could spark a humanitarian crisis with wider, destabilizing, regional impacts.

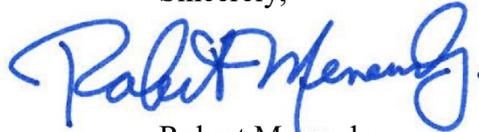
Under the Rajapaksas, Sri Lanka has been left on the brink of financial ruin and humanitarian catastrophe. Mahinda Rajapaksa led his country straight into a Chinese debt trap and then his brother, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, failed to take the prudent economic steps necessary to avoid a default on its sovereign debt. Today, Sri Lankans of all backgrounds are rising up to make clear that it is time for a change.

New Delhi has already taken a proactive role in providing loans and humanitarian assistance to the Sri Lankan government to avoid a meltdown, while Washington is preparing long-term economic support. Tokyo is providing food assistance to the Sri Lankan people. These are all positive steps. But there is more than can be done via the Quad, including by mobilizing additional humanitarian assistance, providing badly-needed fuel, and offering technical support and advice in the areas of financial accounting, health, food security, and macroeconomic policy. Through the new Quad Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Mechanism (HADR), Tokyo and Canberra can play a bigger role and demonstrate that the Quad is capable of tackling challenges across the entire breadth of the Indo-Pacific region.

On the diplomatic front, all four Quad nations must stand together this year at the U.N. Human Rights Council when the body receives the High Commissioner's report on war crimes committed during Sri Lanka's civil war. Diplomatic unity would help demonstrate the Quad's commitment to accountability and respect for international humanitarian laws.

These sorts of efforts above would demonstrate to the entire region that the Quad is a robust, agile and critical component of emergent Indo-Pacific architecture essential to meeting changing circumstances and challenges in the region.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
Chairman