

## **Statement of Sri Lanka at the Delhi Ministerial Dialogue**

**3-4 October - New Delhi, India**

Made by H E Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam,  
High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in India

Madam Chair

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for Sri Lanka to be associated in this important event. We thank UNDESA and the Government of India for organizing this Dialogue.

Sri Lanka has had an unbroken record of sustainable resource consumption conceived and implemented based on Buddhist and Hindu cultural concepts dating back two-and-a-half millennia. Therefore, Sri Lanka has been fortunate to have escaped man-made environmental problems in any significant proportion until the latter quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, with the transition from an agricultural economy to industry, rise in population and increasing consumerism, we are now experiencing several environmental issues that have an increasingly negative impact on sustainable development endeavors.

Excellencies,

Rapid economic growth increases pressure on environmental sustainability. Most of the countries are today confronted with multiple crises relating to energy, water, food and finance. Environmental impacts due to unsustainable production and consumption are posing unprecedented challenges to all countries.

Today, it is a tremendous challenge to reverse unsustainable production and consumption patterns that are ingrained in massive resource intensive

infrastructure. The costs of reversing the “Business as Usual” scenarios are much higher.

Excellencies,

The economic and environmental impact related to unsustainable economic growth signals the urgent need to make a paradigm shift from the way we determine human development today. The crises, especially in the context of climate change, energy, water and food provide a unique opportunity for a fundamental restructuring of the economic development model that could encourage and sustain a Green Economy.

Thus, it is required to put the economies, in particular developed countries, on a different trajectory as regards material and energy consumption at a lower levels of energy and material use.

Environment and economic policies are complementary. We need to regulate market mechanisms to promote new and innovative investments in green technology. In this process we should be mindful to ensure that the solutions and incentives should be attuned to each country’s potential and limitations in terms of energy availability, wealth and natural resources as well as cultural heritage. Governments alone cannot manage and fund the transition to a green economy; the private sector and the civil society can and must play a fundamental role but requires incentives.

Excellencies,

Sri Lanka has identified the way for moving towards a new “Green Growth” paradigm by seeking to harmonize “economic growth” with “environmental sustainability”.

I am happy to share with you some of the green growth initiatives by Sri Lanka to hasten our journey towards achieving sustainable development and economic growth.

- First, we established the National Council for Sustainable Development, under the leadership of H.E the President of Sri Lanka to ensure political commitment at the highest level.
- Second, we developed a new programme named *Green Lanka* to evolve long term plans for sustainable economic and social development. A comprehensive plan to be implemented from 2009-2016 titled “National Action Plan for Haritha (Green) Lanka Programme” was evolved under the supervision of the National Council for Sustainable Development. This covers ten environmentally sensitive thrust areas. This programme has been incorporated into Sri Lanka’s National Development Agenda “**Mahinda Chinthanaya - Vision for the Future**”.
- Third, we have enacted an Environmental Conservation Levy Act to secure financial resources in environmental management based on the Polluter Pays Principle. Our vision in this process is to achieve sustainability for the benefit of present and future generations.
- Another important step that we have taken is the development of an index that we call “Sustainable Human Development Index”, to interpret human development with ecological factors as well. You would agree that a realistic interpretation of human development is needed for global and local communities alike to lead us along the path of sustainable development, taking into account all relevant factors, especially environment.

Sri Lanka is committed to minimize energy, water and electricity consumption, and to prevent environmental degradation such as air, water and land pollution.

While we take action in this direction, I would like to state that we have actually performed well in the path of sustainable development following our traditions since ancient times. Sri Lanka, at the same time, maintains a high quality of life especially in education and healthcare. Life expectancy at birth in Sri Lanka is 76 years, literacy is 92%. We have put in place many welfare programmes to eradicate poverty and malnutrition. In terms of natural resources and biodiversity conservation, we have maintained a satisfactory level of natural forest (23%) and tree cover (over 60% of land area). Moreover, in respect of climate change, Sri Lanka is in an insignificant position being a low carbon emission country with only 600kg per person per year. However, we are concerned that Sri Lanka, despite having achieved a low carbon economy, ensuring sustainable development, has not received any significant global recognition and support in global mechanisms and processes of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Finally, I will take this opportunity to thank the Government of India for the excellent hospitality.

Thank you