

MAIN MESSAGES FROM SRI LANKA VNR TO HLPF 2018

Introduction

Having overcome a three decade long terrorist conflict, Sri Lanka has begun its “transformation towards a sustainable and resilient society”. The poverty rate has dropped to 4.1% in 2016 and country is reaching towards the upper middle income status with a per capita GDP of USD 4,066 in 2017. Unemployment rate stood below 5% for last seven years. Free education and health policies have resulted in high life expectancy (75 years) and high youth literacy (98.7%) rates. UN has recognized Sri Lanka among “high human development” achieved countries.

Stakeholder engagement:

Increasing the multi-stakeholder engagement for the 2030 agenda was a key objective of the VNR process designed by a multi-stakeholder committee; guided by a Task Force; and facilitated by a Consultant. Stakeholders across the country were consulted in five workshops. An online engagement platform was developed.

Key plans and strategies for implementation of SDGs:

The government’s “Vision 2025” that provides the overall vision and the Public Investment Programme, the three-year rolling plan align significantly with SDGs.

The National Budget 2018 focuses on a “Blue Green Economy” envisaged to create an eco-friendly environment where all can co-exist harmoniously.

Means of implementation:

The Sustainable Development Act enacted in October 2017 provides for formulating a national sustainable development policy and strategy. The President has appointed the Sustainable Development Council to implement the Act.

The government adopted mainstreaming SDGs into institutional plans as its main strategy to achieve SDGs.

Main challenges encountered and areas of progress:

Poverty

Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of 1.9 % in 2012/2013 reflects reduction in poverty. However, poverty pockets exist throughout country and disparities observed among districts.

Efficiency and coverage of the existing social protection programmes are being improved to support the poor and vulnerable.

Health

Maternal mortality, under-five mortality and neonatal mortality have reduced remarkably. Population aging and increasing non-communicable diseases are challenges. Health Policy 2016 - 2025 addresses issues in financing, regulations and primary healthcare.

Education

Sri Lanka has achieved near universality in youth literacy rate, school enrollment and primary education completion. Improving the quality and relevance of education, increasing access to higher and vocational education, standardizing non-state education and strengthening linkage between general and vocational education remain challenges.

Gender equality

Sri Lanka ranks 73rd out of 188 countries in the gender inequality index. Gender inequalities are observed in labor force participation and political representation.

Regulations have been introduced to facilitate women to balance work with their responsibilities within the family. Women's share in local authorities has been increased through legislation.

Water & Sanitation

Around 89.5% of the population has access to safe drinking water. However, disparities exist regionally and issues exist on quality and quantity of drinking water.

87 % of the population possesses onsite sanitation facilities. Providing facilities to the rest and managing wastewater in urban centers and industrialized areas remain challenges.

Energy

Sri Lanka has over 98% coverage of domestic electricity supply. Renewable sources account for 53% of total primary energy supply. Rising dependency on imports and cost of energy are challenges. The government explores renewable energy options, demand side management, and regulating the sector.

Transport

Public transport accounts for 57% of passengers. Traffic congestion in urban areas, increasing private vehicle usage and road accidents are challenges. Measures such as railway electrification, Light Rail Transit System and fuel efficient vehicles are being introduced to modernize transport.

Tourism

Sri Lanka has tremendous potential for tourism with its geographical location and the many diverse attractions within a relatively small area. Annual tourist arrivals have increased five-fold during the last ten years. A transformation in the tourism strategy is needed for its sustainability.

Natural resources

Sri Lanka is one of the world's 35 biodiversity hotspots. High level of endemism is observed in most taxonomic groups. However, a considerable number of species are threatened species. Meanwhile, deforestation has become a challenge due to increased demand for land. Solutions have been identified in the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan.

Peace

The government seeks to build a peaceful, stable, reconciled and prosperous Sri Lanka based on a three-pillared strategy of strengthening democracy, reconciliation, and economic development, with the participation of all stakeholders, as reflected in the Peacebuilding Priority Plan as well.