



High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2021

General Debate

Statement by Professor Admiral Jayanath Colombage

Foreign Secretary of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the United Nations Economic and Social Council for bringing all Nations together at this critical juncture to share experiences, strengthen partnerships and promote international cooperation towards achieving the SDGs.

The unprecedented challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic requires sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery plan to scale up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Sri Lanka's National Policy Framework "Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour" has been driven by the global level of ambition and effectively set national targets to gear our national development process towards achieving SDGs by the target year 2030.

Further reinforcing our commitment to achieving SDGs, an inter-ministerial Steering Committee was established with a view to building strong national ownership towards SDGs and ensuring policy coherence and coordinated action on the part of all stakeholders.

We have set an ambitious but an achievable target of vaccinating all our citizens by 30th September 2021.

We have made significant progress in alleviating extreme poverty during the past decade. The Poverty Headcount Ratio (PHCR) declined to 4.1 per cent in 2016. Sri Lanka prioritized several short to long term initiatives to prevent any possible reversal of our poverty rates due to the economic contraction experienced by us during the Pandemic. The Government expanded the social protection programmes to people living in isolated areas, vulnerable groups, and those who were employed in the informal sector and small and medium scale enterprises by offering a range of financial and material benefits. Approximately (06) million families benefited under these emergency relief programmes. To promote equitable and sustainable social protection systems and secure retirement income of non-state employees, a contributory Pension Scheme has been proposed by the Government.

While ensuring food security and nutrition, Sri Lanka has put strong emphasis on promoting access to a non-toxic and balanced diet. The recent Cabinet decision to ban import of chemical fertilizers into the country aims at acquiring long-term benefits from organic fertilizers, such as improved soil fertility, increased productivity and a healthier population. We expect that this transitional decision will open up international market space and to uplift domestic agriculture and promote the concept of 'Small Family Farming' and 'Urban Farming'.

Sri Lanka emphasizes the importance of just transition to a green economy. In line with the recent presidential initiative on "climate resilient and green economy" policy agenda, adoption of business models that promotes 3R concept - Reduce Reuse and Recycle, will also be promoted towards a circular economy.

The Ministry of Justice is spearheading the formulation of a new Constitution that fulfills the aspiration of the people. In addition, through a comprehensive legal and judicial reform process, improvements to court infrastructure and human resources are being implemented including an extensive digitalization programme to overcome the issue of laws delays and case accumulation.

Sri Lanka remains committed to remaining engaged, forging partnerships and fostering international cooperation towards transformative pathways to achieve the sustainable development.

Thank you very much!