

Statement made by Mr. Ariyaratne Hewage, Head of the Sri Lanka Delegation, at the High Level Segment of 24th Session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change (COP24) and 14th Session of the Conference of Parties serving as a Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP14), at 3.00 p.m. on 12th December 2018 in Katowice, Poland.

Good Evening to all

Mr. President of COP24 and CMP14

Executive Secretary to the UNFCCC Secretariat

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed a great pleasure and a privilege to deliver my statement at this august forum. Sri Lanka wishes to convey its appreciation to the Government and people of Republic of Poland for hosting this important conference in an excellent manner in this beautiful city of Katowice and warm hospitality extended to us. Let me also extend our thanks and gratitude to Fiji for a successful presidency of COP23.

I am delighted to say that with the exemplary guidance and leadership provided by the President of Sri Lanka who is also the Minister in-charge of the Environment, we are marching towards achieving our commitments under the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals.

Being a tropical island which is highly susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change, Sri Lanka has been ranked as one of the most vulnerable countries in the Global Climate Risk Index.

Sri Lanka's dry zone covers 70% of its land area and is the home for nearly a third of its population who depends on agriculture for their livelihood. The dry zone receives less than 1,500 millimeters of rainfall per year with prolonged droughts as a common phenomenon. Adverse impacts of climate change threaten the wellbeing of people, ecosystems and key economic sectors such as agriculture, forestry, biodiversity, marine and fisheries, coastal and tourism leading to severe drawback in socio-economic development. As an agriculture-based country, Sri Lanka experiences many hardships due to shifts in seasonal

rainfall patterns and prolonged droughts resulting in changing the patterns of life including internal migration.

It is observed that during the recent past, the people living in dry zone areas who rely on ground water are particularly susceptible to Chronic kidney diseases mainly due to consumption of contaminated water. This situation has created an additional burden on health services.

Many disasters that Sri Lanka is facing particularly after 2015 such as prolonged droughts, flash floods and landslides have affected over 1.6 million families resulting in loss and damage to lives, livelihoods, and property. The total expenditure incurred on disaster relief amounted to USD12,590,860 & USD51,689,850 in 2016 & 2017 respectively.

Sri Lanka has taken several climate smart initiatives for policy formulation and implementation through mitigation and adaptation strategies and actions. I am pleased to state

that country has already implemented multipurpose water resource management projects to address adverse impacts of climate change for the benefit of the communities in dry zone area.

Commissioning of Moragahakanda and Kaluganga multipurpose water resources projects can be highlighted as one of the largest recent green investment introduced in Sri Lanka to combat the adverse effects of climate change by providing required water for drinking and agriculture for the dry zone communities. These twin reservoirs with the capacity of 817 Million Cubic Meters boost the economy through irrigating additional 84,000 hectares of farmlands in Northern, Central and Eastern Provinces with generation of 25 MW hydro-power.

Sri Lanka has embarked on ambitious projects to increase the forest cover from 29% to 32% by 2030 and also pledged to be the champion of the action group for mangrove restoration under the Commonwealth Blue Charter.

At present, several feasibility studies are being carried out to explore the possibility of trans-basin transfer of surplus water from the wet zone to the dry zone region, building or upgrading more than 260 km of canals, large scale water storing reservoirs, and other irrigation infrastructure to deliver water to the areas suffering from water scarcity and drought for agriculture, as well as safe drinking water to the people.

The country focuses on its vulnerable communities in implementing the nationally determined contributions of different sectors, as well as the implementation of the country's national adaptation plan. From strengthening the resilience of smallholder farmers in the dry zone, building resilience in livelihoods among the impacted communities, to engage youth of the country in the climate decision making processes, Sri Lanka is committed to inclusive and participatory climate actions to ensure that concrete actions are taken to address the vulnerabilities to climate change.

We are aware that the critical Ecosystem services such as; production of Oxygen, sequestering of Carbon, water cycling and ambient cooling are carried out by the photosynthetic component of biomass. This is being lost at an exponential rate, due to the fact that these Ecosystem Services have not been valued, nor economically recognized. Hence, we would request through you the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to examine the value of photosynthetic biomass.

Mr. President, Sri Lanka further wishes to stress the need for all financial flows provided and mobilized taking into account the needs and priorities of developing country parties. In the face of increasing number and intensity of extreme weather events, there is an urgent need for effective action on the provision of technical and financial resources, including the technology development, transfer and capacity building of developing countries in order to minimize the losses and damages. It is also important that capacity building should be based on national needs

ensuring the country-ownership through the process of participatory approach.

Mr. President, we wish to bring to your attention that financial support mechanisms established under the UNFCCC seem experiencing some difficulties when processing required funding for climate projects. For example, the Green Climate Fund which is particularly established to support developing countries for climate adaptation and mitigation has not received the funding from some developed countries as pledged. As a result, there is a long delay in processing pipeline projects. Further, internal administrative issues of funding agencies hamper the timely implementation of projects to meet the respective national commitments.

Sri Lanka recognizes the importance of the role of COP, and highlights the need to take effective and concrete steps for finalizing the follow up actions of the Paris Agreement. With the increasing trends of climate risks, we are not in a

position to further delay our commitments for climate actions. The developing countries especially in the tropics are highly vulnerable to these increased risks, and needs efficient and effective means of implementation to enable them to make their contributions under the Paris Agreement, as well as to ensure that efforts are sustainable.

Mr. President, we recall the need for urgency, inclusiveness, gender sensitive and participatory climate action, which extends to the inclusion and participation of vulnerable communities, and multiple stakeholders including civil society, private sector, youth, women, academia and strengthening the public participation at all levels.

Finally, Sri Lanka assures our continued commitment to the success of convention. We wish to reiterate our full confidence and unreserved support to the Chairs, Co-

Chairs and Co-facilitators of various subsidiary and constituted bodies of the UNFCCC.

Once again, I take this opportunity to convey our gratitude for the great hospitality extended by the Government of Republic Poland.

Wish you all the best.

I thank you, Mr. President