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Sustainable Development Council

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United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

Eighth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

Statement of the Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka

- Thank you for the opportunity given to Sri Lanka to present the progress made with regard to ensuring an inclusive and sustainable recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The paramount consideration of the Government of Sri Lanka has been to minimize the economic and social disparities likely to be widened by the pandemic and to ensure that important gains made by Sri Lanka on SDGs are not reversed. A multi-pronged approach focusing particularly on ensuring good health and well-being, food security and building resilient livelihoods is promoted in an inclusive and equitable manner to address the multiple forms of vulnerabilities created by the pandemic to ensure that **'no one is left behind'** in the recovery efforts.
- Sri Lanka has made great strides in keeping the spread of the pandemic to a minimum through strict enforcement of quarantine regulations, social distancing measures and clinical practice guidelines. We have managed to keep the fatality rate extremely low at 0.6% and a high recovery rate of 96% becoming one of Asia's success stories in managing the pandemic. Immediate steps have been taken to make the Covid-19 vaccination available on an equitable basis to the population while ensuring priority access to those who are most vulnerable guaranteeing the health and well-being of all Sri Lankans.
- Daily wage earners, Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and the informal sector workers that account for more than 70% of the labor force in Sri Lanka are the most vulnerable of being pushed below the poverty line threshold with potential job losses caused by the contraction of both the domestic and external labor markets. The strict application of our labor regulations has provided security against excessive staff retrenchment and ensured minimum wages during lockdown periods. To ensure the resilience of MSME's, a package of incentives was given, such as low interest working capital loans etc. to ensure the continuity of business operations during the most pressing periods. The Government of Sri Lanka recently signed a \$165 million loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to provide immediate financing support for SMEs, which have been severely affected by the pandemic, including businesses led by women and tea smallholders. Several concessionary schemes are still in place to support the affected businesses, particularly on leasing facilities obtained by businesses and individuals, until their income generating activities return to normalcy.
- A range of financial and material benefits were granted to over six (06) million affected families and vulnerable groups which greatly supported them in coping with the socio-economic shocks emerging from the pandemic.

- The cumulative effect was an inclusive and resilient recovery from the pandemic prioritizing those groups at the threshold of vulnerability in the recovery efforts.
- I am pleased to state that, in reinforcing its commitment to SDGs at the highest level, an inter-ministerial steering committee headed by the Prime Minister is now leading the SDG process in Sri Lanka building strong national ownership of SDGs and mobilizing all stakeholders, both government and non-government, towards SDGs.
- Our policy of friendly and constructive engagement with all friendly nations has enabled us to mobilize both bilateral and multilateral cooperation towards the recovery efforts. We look forward to further strengthening our ties with the regional allies particularly for greater collaboration on investments, trading opportunities, technology and knowledge transfer.



Chamindry Saparamadu
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