



# 12<sup>th</sup> South Asia Economic Summit



## Shaping South Asia's Future in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

26 - 27 September 2019  
Colombo, Sri Lanka

### Background

The South Asian Economic Summit (SAES) was launched in 2008 with the first Summit being held in Colombo, Sri Lanka. To date, 11 Summits have been held each year in the capitals of South Asian countries. The Summit has provided a regional platform for discussing and debating socio-economic challenges facing the region. SAES also aims to foster and develop regional integration and co-operation among the South Asian countries. Each year, the SAES brings together stakeholders from the government, private sector, research/academic community, donors and civil society from within and outside the region with an interest in South Asia to deliberate on issues of importance to the region and generate new ideas and solutions for consideration by the policymakers of the region. SAES has evolved into one of the most looked-forward to events for those with an interest in development and regional integration in South Asia.

The Initiative has been led by five prominent South Asian think tanks which have taken turns in organising and hosting the annual event in one of the SAARC nations on a rotating basis. The SAES think tanks comprise of: Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh; Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), India; Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan; South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal; and the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS), Sri Lanka.

### Objectives

SAES XII is organised in Colombo, Sri Lanka by the IPS. SAES XII will focus on the theme of *Shaping South Asia's Future in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)*. SAES XII aims to uncover the prospects and challenges for South Asia in harnessing the 4IR and discovering potential avenues for cooperation through a multi-stakeholder dialogue, on how the region can constructively shape its future in the 4IR to improve the well-being of its people, individually and collectively.

### 12th South Asia Economic Summit (SAES)

Today, South Asia is the fastest growing region in the world, recording growth in excess of 7 per cent on average, outperforming its historical competitors in East Asia and the Pacific. While, high and rapid growth has been accompanied by a remarkable reduction in absolute poverty, the region still holds the largest share of the world's poor and has witnessed rising levels of income inequality. Changes to South Asia's growth patterns and a fast evolving demographic transition – whereby the numbers of workers entering the labour force are higher than the jobs being created – are also generating its own set of challenges. Jobless growth, low female labour force participation (only 40% to that of men) and inadequate skills are some of the most prominent concerns across countries in the region.

To address these, higher spending on social sectors to build human capital, connecting lagging regions through better infrastructure, implementing policies to ease the flow of goods and services, and improving institutional and governance structures to strengthen the rule of law and tackle corruption are amongst some pressing areas of reform that South Asia needs. These take on even more urgency as the region's demographic transition brings with it the promise of a youth dividend whereby 1.8 million youth will reach the working age every month, through 2025.

Thus, if the youth are educated and provided with productive jobs, South Asia can convert its strong growth presence as of today to far more sustainable and equitable development outcomes in the longer term. However, failure to exploit its youth dividend can leave the region vulnerable to serious socio-economic conditions/imbbalances and political unrest. The application of new digital and automated technologies – the so-called 4IR – can hasten or slowdown the process of this structural transformation in South Asia. While the pace and speed at which 4IR will transform production processes and service delivery is contested, what is not disputed is the potential for disruptive technology (Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain 3D printing) to drive productivity and hence economic growth, in the years to come.

For South Asia, as in many other developing country regions, the benefits and pitfalls of 4IR are significant. On the one hand, the 4IR may allow countries to leapfrog development stages. Those with better established manufacturing bases or with resources to invest in technologies stand to benefit. At the same time, technological-driven productivity that drives down costs of production in advanced economies can hasten 'premature' de-industrialisation in others. For many, the threat of human labour displacement by automation is very real.

To this end, the disruption of technology through 4IR presents a watershed moment for South Asia. 4IR is not only driving the Fourth Wave of Globalisation, but it is also introducing new tools to assess and understand competitiveness. Concepts such as entrepreneurial culture, embracing disruptive ideas, multi-stakeholder collaboration, critical thinking, meritocracy and social trust – along with more traditional components like ICT and physical infrastructure, macroeconomic stability, property rights, and years of schooling – will form the defining features of economic success in the 4IR.

South Asia's challenge, therefore, is not merely limited to technological adoption, but rather a broader challenge to reform its laws, institutions, and economic structures that can adequately respond to a world that does not recognise national borders. In this regard, the South Asian region as a whole is being afforded with another opportunity to revisit means of cooperation in areas such as value chain linkages that circumvent traditional barriers to trade, improved resource management and technology transfers and innovations that could set up the region as a leader for other developing countries and regions.

8.00-09.00

## Registration

9.00-10.15

## Inaugural Session

Introduction to the 12th South Asia Economic Summit by Dr. Janaka Wijayasiri, Research Fellow, IPS, Sri Lanka  
Welcome Address by Dr. Dushni Weerakoon, Executive Director, IPS, Sri Lanka  
Keynote Address by Hon. Mangala Samaraweera, Minister of Finance, Sri Lanka  
Releases in Honour of Dr. Saman Kelegama

- *South Asia Economic Journal: Special Issue to Mark 20 Years*
- *Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Food Security in South Asia*
- *Managing Domestic and International Challenges and Opportunities in Post-conflict Development: Lessons from Sri Lanka*

10.15-10.45

## Refreshments



10.45-12.15

## Plenary I (Grand Ballroom)

### Growth, and Equity - Achieving SDGs in South Asia in 4IR

Moderator: Dr. Ratnakar Adhikari, Executive Director, Enhanced Integrated Framework, WTO, Switzerland  
Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director, South and South-West Asia Office - UNESCAP, India  
Dr. Swarnim Wagle, Former Vice-Chair, National Planning Commission, Nepal  
Dr. Abid Q. Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, Pakistan  
Dr. Nisha Arunatilake, Director of Research, IPS, Sri Lanka  
Mr. Nazir Kabiri, Executive Director, Biruni Institute, Afghanistan

12.15-13.30

## Group Photo and Lunch (Grand Ballroom 2)

13.30-15.00

## Parallel Sessions A

### A1

#### Providing Macroeconomic Stability for Growth during 4IR (Amethyst 1)

Moderator: Prof. Selim Raihan, Executive Director, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, Bangladesh

Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, SDPI, Pakistan

Prof. N. R. Bhanumurthy, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, India

Mr. Shiran Fernando, Chief Economist, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, Sri Lanka

Dr. Dilli Raj Khanal, Economist and Former MP, Nepal

Dr. Omar Joya, Head of Research, Biruni Institute, Afghanistan

### A2

#### Promoting Trade with 4IR (Amethyst 2)

Moderator: Mr. Deshal De Mel, Former Economic Advisor, Ministry of Finance, Sri Lanka

Dr. Ganeshan Wignaraja, Executive Director, Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute, Sri Lanka

Dr. Nisha Taneja, Professor, Indian Council for Research and International Economic Relations, India

Dr. Puspa Sharma, Deputy Executive, SAWTEE, Nepal

Mr. Yusuf Saleem, CEO Autonomation, MAS Innovation, Sri Lanka

Mr. Sonam Tashi, Chief Planning Officer, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Bhutan

Ms. Hang Tran, Senior Coordinator, Enhanced Integrated Framework, Switzerland

### A3

#### Addressing Inequalities and 4IR (Moonstone)

Moderator: Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director, South and South-West Asia Office - UNESCAP, India

Dr. P. K. Anand, Visiting Fellow, RIS, India

Prof. Mustafizur Rahman, Distinguished Fellow, CPD, Bangladesh

Ms. Chimi Dema, Assistant Planning Officer, Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat, Bhutan

Mr. Abdul Waheed Ahmad, Senior Policy Advisor, National Center for Dialogue and Progress, Afghanistan

Dr. Sugath Yalagama, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment, Sri Lanka





15.00-15.30

## Refreshments



15.30-17.00

## Parallel Sessions B

### B1 Gender, Equality, and 4IR (Amethyst 1)

Moderator: Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna,  
Economic Affairs Officer, UNESCAP, India  
Dr. Malavika Chauhan, Deputy Director -  
Design, Tata Trusts, India  
Ms. Fauzia Viqar, Former Chairperson,  
Punjab Commission on the Status of  
Women, Pakistan  
Dr. Ramani Gunatilaka, Independent  
Consultant, Sri Lanka  
Ms. Pragati Koirala, Research Officer,  
SAWTEE, Nepal

### B2 Managing Labour Migration in 4IR (Amethyst 2)

Moderator: Mrs. Padmini Ratnayake,  
Advisor, Ministry of Justice, Sri Lanka  
Prof. S Irudaya Rajan, Professor, Centre for  
Development Studies, India  
Mr. Shabari Nair, Labour Migration  
Specialist, ILO, India  
Dr. Syeda Rozana Rashid, Professor,  
University of Dhaka, Bangladesh  
Dr. Bilesha Weeraratne, Research Fellow,  
IPS, Sri Lanka

### B3 Changing the World of Work for Youth in 4IR (Moonstone)

Moderator: Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Joint  
Executive Director, SDPI, Pakistan  
Mr. Sixit Bhatta, CEO, Tooootle, Nepal  
Ms. Shubha Srinivasan, Director - Social  
Impact, Deloitte India  
Dr. Lei Lei Song, Regional Economic Advisor,  
South Asia Department, ADB  
Dr. Sujata Gamage, Senior Research Fellow,  
LIRNEasia, Sri Lanka  
Mr. Lahiru Pathmalal, CEO and  
Co-founder, Takas, Sri Lanka

18.30 -22.00

**Saman Kelegama Memorial Lecture, Delivered by Hon. Dr. Harsha De Silva,  
Minister of Economic Reforms and Public Distribution, Sri Lanka,  
followed by Cultural Programme and Fellowship Dinner (By Invitation)**

**Day Two**  
**27/09/2019**

9.00-10.30

## Plenary 2 (Grand Ballroom)

### Meeting Challenges in the New World of Work under 4IR

*Book release: Manufacturing and Jobs in South Asia: Strategy for Sustainable Economic Growth*

Moderator: Dr. Radhicka Kapoor, Senior Fellow, Indian Council for Research and International Economic Relations, India  
Dr. Aliya H. Khan, Professor, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan  
Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, Chairman, SAWTEE, Nepal  
Dr. Fahmida Khatun, Executive Director, CPD, Bangladesh  
Dr. Vikrom Mathur, Founding Director, TANDEM Research, India  
Dr. Lei Lei Song, Regional Economic Advisor, South Asia Department, ADB, the Philippines

10.30-11.00

## Refreshments



11.00-12.30

## Parallel Sessions C

### C1 Governance, Business, and Civil Society in 4IR (Amethyst 1)

Moderator: Dr. Shamika Ravi, Director  
(Research), Brookings India  
Mr. Afzal Hossain Sarwar, Policy  
Specialist, a2i, Bangladesh  
Mr. Mohamed Shareef, Permanent  
Secretary, National Centre for Information  
Technology, Maldives  
Mr. Ganaka Herath, Managing Partner,  
McKinsey Sri Lanka  
Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik, Executive  
Committee Member SAARC Chamber of  
Commerce and Industry, Pakistan

### C2 Supporting Innovative Research- 20 Years of the South Asia Economic Journal (Amethyst 2)

Moderator: Dr. Prabir De, Professor,  
RIS, India  
Presenter 1: Dr. Arpita Mukherjee,  
Professor, Indian Council for Research on  
International Economic Relations, India  
Presenter 2: Mr. Syed Yusuf Saadat,  
Research Associate, CPD, Bangladesh  
Presenter 3: Dr. Kaushiki Sanyal, CEO and  
Co-Founder, Sunay Policy Advisory, India  
Discussants: Prof. Selim Raihan, Executive  
Director, South Asian Network on  
Economic Modeling, Bangladesh &  
Dr. Puspa Sharma, Deputy Executive

### C3 Driving Agriculture in 4IR (Moonstone)

Moderator: Dr. Khan Ahmed Sayeed  
Murshid, Director General, Bangladesh  
Institute for Development Studies,  
Bangladesh  
Mr. Kunal Prasad, Co-founder & COO,  
Cropin, India  
Mr. Damitha Gunawardena, Manager -  
Group Sustainability, Dialog, Sri Lanka  
Ms. Aisha Niaz, Sustainable Development  
Consultant, Aishaniyazconsulting, Maldives  
Ms. Moushumi Shrestha, Director,  
Shreenagar Agro Group, Nepal

12.30-13.30

## Lunch (Grand Ballroom 2)

13.30-15.00

## Parallel Sessions D

### D1 Innovation, Connectivity and Security in South Asia during 4IR (Amethyst 1)

Moderator: Mr. Sachindra Samararatne, Program Head, ICTA, Sri Lanka  
Dr. Sabyasachi Saha, Assistant Professor, RIS, India  
Dr Prativa Pandey, Founder and CEO, Catalyst Technology, Nepal  
Mr. Anushka Wijesinha, Member, Global Future Council on Innovation Ecosystems - World Economic Forum  
Mr. Arif Sargana, Director (Economic Section), Pakistan Telecom Authority

### D2 Promoting 4IR Driven Collaborative Regional Initiatives in South Asia (Amethyst 2)

Moderator: Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka  
Dr. Prabir De, Professor, RIS, India  
Dr. Paras Kharel, Research Director, SAWTEE, Nepal  
Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem, Research Director, CPD, Bangladesh  
Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik, Executive Committee Member SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Pakistan

15.00-16.30

## Plenary 3 and Closing Session (Grand Ballroom)

### Promoting Innovation and Disruption in 4IR

Moderator: Ms. Randhula de Silva, CEO, Hatch, Sri Lanka  
Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS, India  
Mr. Asif Ibrahim, Vice Chair, New Age Group, Bangladesh  
Dr. W. A. Wijewardena, Former Deputy Governor, Central Bank of Sri Lanka  
Mr. Pranjal Sharma, Economic Analyst and Author, India  
Ms. Lakmini Wijesundera, CEO, IronOne Technologies, Sri Lanka

<http://www.ips.lk/saes2019/>



#SAESXII

#### PARTNERS



#### SPONSORS

