

Getting to Zero:

MOBILIZING PARLIAMENTS TO ACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Distinguished Parliamentarians,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Today I am glad to address you in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia.

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to global prosperity and development. It is alarming that the increased emissions of greenhouse gases will leave the world irrevocably changed. Climate change reflects on the rise of sea level and a vastly different climate, including devastating heat waves, persistent droughts, and unprecedented floods. It would impact the lives of people, mainly the poor and vulnerable, including food and health security, infrastructure, and ecosystem integrity.

As the policymakers, we unitedly stand for the global priority, to cut global greenhouse gas emissions, increase forest coverage, and restrict environmentally harmful human activities, in order to limit global average temperature rise.

We strongly believe that the Legislators as the representatives of the people have a pivotal role in identifying and highlighting good practice at the local level in order to formulate national policies and legislation while educating the general public about the global challenge of climate change.

Now let's briefly discuss the situation in my country, Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka, a tropical nation, is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. As a small island in the Indian Ocean, the coastal region of Sri Lanka is susceptible to changes in sea level. One-third

of the total population of the country lives in the coastal belt which was severely affected in the Tsunami 2004. It has indicated vulnerability of sea level in the future. Global climate change also would affect the national economy and livelihood of the people who are engaged in tourism, agriculture, plantation, and fisheries sectors.

In order to address the environmental challenges caused by climate change, a Climate Change Secretariat was established under the Ministry of Environment.

The Cabinet memorandum adopted in 2021 on 'Nationally Determined Contributions' related to Paris Climate Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has highlighted that Sri Lanka has been acting as a stakeholder of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change from 1993 and signed the Paris Climate Agreement and ratified the agreement in 2016. The fundamental objective of the Paris Agreement is to maintain global warming under 2 Celsius compared to the pre-industrialisation era level and to take all applicable precautions to maintain it at 1.5 Celsius.

In relation to that, the Cabinet has approved the proposal by the Environment Minister to submit the Nationally Determined Contributions that have been re-updated with the participation of stakeholder institutions of the relevant sectors by adjusting to the Government policies and to appoint a National Monitoring Committee to supervise whether these contributions are implemented efficiently and productively. The action plan covers the following strategic areas;

1. *Clean Air in everywhere*

2. *Saving the Fauna, Flora, and Ecosystems*
3. *Meeting the Challenges of Climate Change*
4. *Wise Use of the Coastal Belt and the Sea Around*
5. *Responsible Use of the Land Resources*
6. *Doing Away with the Dumps*
7. *Water for All and Always*
8. *Green Cities for Health and Prosperity*
9. *Greening the Industries*
10. *Knowledge for Right Choices*

Next, what is the role of the Parliament? Parliament has special commitments to focus on lawmaking and oversight with regard to mitigating climate change and minimizing carbon emission and transforming to renewable energy policy, as proposed in the Budget proposals in 2021. In addition, Parliamentary Committees such as the Ministerial Consultative Committees and Special Committees can study alternative approaches and scrutinize the existing systems with experience and knowledge of the academia and the experts. The parliamentary committees provide ideal forums for fruitful discussions on key areas. The executive, legislature and bureaucracy are in a position to initiate relevant programmes.

Finally, it is the responsibility of the Parliament to allocate more financial resources for Climate Action, which is goal No. 13 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you all for being here!