

**Mainstreaming Climate Change for Sustainable Development in Sri Lanka:
Drafting a Strategic Plan to Coordinate National Action**

**Hotel Amaya Lake, Dambulla
19 – 21 August 2009**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to this national workshop on Mainstreaming Climate Change for Sustainable Development in Sri Lanka, organized by the Institute of Policy Studies, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the UNESCO Participation Program.

We are indeed pleased to have with us Dr. Nimal Sanderatne, former Senior Visiting Fellow, Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya to inaugurate this workshop and be our chief guest this evening. We are also pleased to have Dr. W.L. Sumathipala, Director, National Ozone Unit and Climate Change Division, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. Both the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the UNESCO Participation Program, as our collaborators, played a pivotal role in organization of this important event.

Needless to say, now it is widely accepted by the scientific community that climate change is a reality. As Michael Jarraud, Secretary General of the World Meteorological

Organization summed up in the release of the 4th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), it is now a question of when and how much, and not if. The impacts of climate change are global; but the impacts of climate change will be more on the developing south.

Climate change is going to be an additional but a definite challenge for development in the South Asian region. The region is physically vulnerable due to its geographic location. Also, it is socio-economically vulnerable since it hosts a vast number of poor and vulnerable populations. The region will continue to experience the impacts of high temperatures, uncertain pattern of precipitation, sea level rise and more extreme weather events including more intense floods, droughts and storms. The consequences of these changes are already evidently affecting the economic performance of South Asian region.

Sri Lanka, being a tropical island located in the lower latitude region of the South Asia, is in physical terms highly vulnerable to climate change impacts in various ways. The island is expected to experience disaster prone extreme weather events more frequently. The resultant volatile weather conditions will create significant impacts on a majority of rural poor, depending on weather-reliant

livelihoods, such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry and so on. The population in low lying coastal areas will be victims of predicted rise in the sea level.

We all know that reduction of green house gas (GHG) emissions has to be achieved through global cooperation. Besides global level attempts, measures need to be taken to confront climate change at regional, sub-regional, national and local levels. National level measures are particularly important for low-emission economies like Sri Lanka. National level measures can focus on the areas of adaptation, capacity building and enhancing the monitoring of climate hazards. Initiating effective action against climate change is necessarily an information-driven process. Since the impacts of climate change are multifaceted, the measures need to be multi-sectoral and should involve a number of stakeholders and a range of agencies. From country perspective, an overall comprehensive policy framework should be in place to facilitate national level strategies to confront climate change.

At policy level, there is much work need to be done in this regard. Responding to this timely and important need, the IPS as the economic policy think tank of the country is in the process of developing a Strategic Action Plan for mainstreaming climate change in the overall national

development scenario of Sri Lanka. The study is financially supported by the UNESCO Participation Program.

This workshop is part of this exercise. During the deliberations of this two-day workshop, we intend to discuss the issues in regard to adaptation to climate change in identified key sectors. Tomorrow's technical presentations will focus on the identified sectors including agriculture, fisheries, coastal resources, water supply and irrigation, energy, forestry and wildlife, health, urban development, industry and infrastructure development and disaster management. The contents of the presentations and the floor discussions will be made use of in formulation of the Strategic Action Plan. The last day Working Group Sessions will facilitate detailed discussions of the priority areas both at national level and sectoral level. The outcome of this discussion will also be fed into the formulation of the Strategic Action Plan.

In this process the workshop is not an end itself. It will serve as the starting point for developing a virtual network for monitoring and information sharing and exchanging experience. We expect that the virtual network will act as a catalyst for coordinated action by relevant stakeholders. The IPS will be engaged in conducting a series of policy oriented research on the subject of Climate Change in the future. We

expect your collaboration and necessary technical support in our future work too.

The IPS is indeed grateful for the collaborative support extended by Dr. W.L. Sumathipala, Director Climate Change Division and National Ozone Unit, Climate Change Secretariat of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and his staff for the organization of this workshop. Also, my thanks go to the UNESCO Participation Program for providing the financial assistance for the Workshop.

May I once again extend a warm welcome to all of you and hope that you will benefit from the deliberations of this workshop in the next 2 days and enjoy your stay at Amaya Lake.