

Welcome Speech- by Dr. Saman Kelegama, Executive Director, IPS

Hon. Prime Minister, Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, Dr. Vidanaptirana, Secretary, Ministry of National Disaster Management, Dr. Peter McCawley, Dean, ADB Institute, representatives from the international organizations, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to this seminar cum workshop on **Post Tsunami Recovery in Sri Lanka: One year On** organized by the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka.

We are honoured this morning by the presence of the Hon. Prime Minister. We thank you for consenting to be the Chief Guest at this session. We fully appreciate you finding the time to be with us today despite your tight schedule. I also thank the new Secretary to the Ministry of National Disaster Management, Dr. Vidanapatirana for his presence here. I warmly welcome Dr. Peter McCawley, Dean, ADB Institute. To all other distinguished participants I extend a warm welcome and thank all of you for finding time to be with us today. I extend a special thanks to those of you who have traveled a long distance from various parts of the country to present here.

Sri Lanka suffered its worst natural disaster in late 2004 when a Tsunami devastated over two-thirds of the coastline of the island. It claimed more than 35,000 human lives, left 21,441 injured, displaced about a million people, and deprived the livelihood of about 200,000 people. In addition, many thousands indirectly linked to the key sectors such as, tourism and fisheries lost their source of livelihood. Massive damage was also inflicted on thousands of houses and other buildings, railways, bridges, communication networks, other infrastructure and capital assets.

Sri Lanka can be proud of how it responded to the immediate challenges of the Tsunami; even the former US president Mr. Bill Clinton said so during his visit to Sri Lanka this week. However, today, almost one year on, it is becoming clear that moving from the immediate relief effort to addressing the massive reconstruction tasks poses a different and, in many ways more complex, set of challenges.

The IPS being the apex economic policy research institute in Sri Lanka, we believe that we have a key role to play in policy development and it is in this context, that the Institute undertook this research relating to the policy challenges brought on by the Tsunami disaster.

The IPS has been working on Tsunami related issues from the very beginning. The latest IPS Report titled, "Listening to those who Lost: Survey and Analysis of Rebuilding and Relocation of Tsunami Affected Households in Sri Lanka" was launched at the IPS with a press briefing. This report presents and analyses the views of Tsunami survivors on rebuilding, relocation and land issues. The IPS Working Paper titled, "Phoenix from the Ashes? Economic Policy Challenges and Opportunities for Post-Tsunami Sri Lanka" highlights the policy challenges, particularly the economic challenges and opportunities presented by the Tsunami. The IPS has also collaborated with other local research institutions in carrying out applied research pertaining to the disaster in order to set out the parameters for an effective National All Hazards Early Warning System for Sri Lanka.

The objective of this two-day workshop is to take stock of the post-Tsunami reconstruction and recovery and to identify and attempt to find policy solutions to the complex set of challenges ahead of Sri Lanka. For this purpose we will launch the report

titled “Post Tsunami Recovery: Issues and Challenges in Sri Lanka” prepared jointly by the IPS and the Asian Economics Centre, University of Melbourne in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank Institute, Tokyo, at this seminar.

The report looks at the areas of livelihoods, housing, early warning and disaster management systems, coordination of donor assisted activities, and macroeconomic policy issues and presents several policy recommendations. Our hope is that these recommendations will contribute to the discussions and debates on appropriate policies for the medium term reconstruction effort.

The first session will be followed by a workshop organized by IPS in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to support livelihood recovery among Tsunami affected households so that they “build back better”. “Building Back Better” requires an understanding of the pre-Tsunami context and the constraints limiting livelihood opportunities. This requires placing post-Tsunami livelihood interventions in the broader economic, social and political context and making greater use of existing research and experience on poverty reduction in Sri Lanka. This workshop has brought together NGOs and international agencies working on post-Tsunami livelihood issues with existing researchers and practitioners working on poverty reduction and livelihood challenges in Sri Lanka. I appreciate the assistance provided by ADBI, UNDP and ILO to make this event possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe that the sessions ahead provide us with an opportunity to discuss post-Tsunami: challenges and issues in its multi-faceted aspects and I encourage all

participants to engage in the debates and discussions over the next two days so that we can formulate a truly multi-stakeholder set of policy recommendations, which can be presented to the Government of Sri Lanka. We will ensure to have the final report in the IPS website for easy downloading and also get the report translated to both Sinhala and Tamil for easy access to a wider audience.

I Thank you.