

Sri Lanka - Country Statement
72 Commission Session of ESCAP
Bangkok, May 15 - 19 2016

Revised

Mr. Chairman

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Firstly, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our great appreciation to the ESCAP Secretariat, led by the able Executive Secretary for organizing this Commission Session with timely coverage of related issues.

The 72nd Commission Session of the ESCAP has its own merits as it is taking place at the point of time which marks the beginning of our journey towards sustainable development goals (SDGs) for the benefits of the present and the future. It is also meaningful for countries like Sri Lanka in terms of its thematic areas for dialogue and follow-up.

The identification of science, technology and innovation (STI) as a key enabler in implementation of the SDGs together with funding, is a step in the right direction. The importance of promoting innovation particularly in developing countries, and the significance of international cooperation to harness the full potential of, and to promote investment in STI for sustainable development is reiterated. The theme of this session on "Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development", is extremely timely and appropriate.

Of special note, is the partnership between ESCAP and Sri Lanka in its ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives. Presently, Sri Lanka is a beneficiary of the Regional Drought Mechanism initiative under the Regional Space

Applications Program and WMP led Panel on Tropical Cyclones Program, the Regional Broadband Connectivity Project and also proposed Women and ICT Frontier Initiative of the ESCAP.

While endorsing the initiatives so far taken, ESCAP also must work in earnest towards more facilitation and support of North-South, South-South and triangular regional international cooperation on STI, and enhance access to science, technology and innovation and knowledge sharing in the region. ESCAP could provide the regional platform to cooperate in and harmonise related programmes. In this context, Sri Lanka is happy to co-sponsor the resolution on "Harnessing Science, Technology and Innovation for inclusive and sustainable development". Sri Lanka values regional cooperation and looks forward to partnering the regional platform for STI which will be established, facilitated and supported by ESCAP.

Let me also outline a number of social and economic achievements to highlight Sri Lanka's journey towards achieving the sustainable development goals. Since independence, Sri Lanka has gradually evolved from a low income, predominantly agricultural economy, to a more diversified, service oriented, lower middle income economy at present. This economic transformation has been complemented by many notable developments, especially in the area of social development, such as education, health and lowered rates of inflation and unemployment.

In the social front, Sri Lanka is continuously performing well to stand at 73rd in the Human Development Index in 2014. Sri Lanka has reduced its Poverty head count ratio from 15.2 in 2006/07 to 6.7 in 2012/13 period. Accordingly, Sri Lanka is well poised on its journey towards achieving the Sustainable development goals.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While Sri Lanka has been a success story in development policy circles, the persisting challenges of rural poverty, income inequality and child under-nutrition are continuing to be addressed. Sri Lanka is also facing contemporary economic drawbacks such as currency fluctuation, slowdown of international trade growth, natural disasters, threat of environmental degradation etc.

With the government change in 2015, Sri Lanka has adopted a new policy framework of 'Social Market Economy', which includes building of the economy, development of the education system, ensuring freedoms, developing infrastructure, and investment. An objective of this policy is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and go beyond, for the betterment of the country.

In the backdrop of asymmetrical nature of economies and trade flows between countries in the Asia and the Pacific region, non-tariff barriers to trade and transaction cost of trade continue to remain major impediments for the expansion of inter country and intra-regional trade. Sri Lanka appreciates the role of ESCAP in promoting a continuous dialogue for further cooperation, to eliminate such trade barriers in the region.

Let us come together as equal partners in this journey in a bid to enrich each of our countries and the region as a whole. Sri Lanka's support continues in this quest in order to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Thank you!