

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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**High-level roundtable on “Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions
through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and
addressing related challenges”**

Statement submitted by

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**High level Roundtable on “Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions
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The Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a great honor and privilege to be part of the 20th Annual Session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). And thank for the opportunity to talk in this session.

Sri Lanka firmly believes this is the high time to discuss “Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges”.

The Government of Sri Lanka has pledged to develop strategies to eliminate poverty while improving the quality of life of our people and sustaining the environmental quality, since independence. The Government's commitment to double the investment in education, health, welfare as well as agriculture, food and nutrition is a clear appreciation of the importance of knowledge in driving our socio economic development.

Here I wish to highlight Sri Lanka had the advantage of a welfare state which had achieved good quality of life indices even before the Millennium Development Goals were set. Since then our economic growth had been 4.4% and poverty rate has come down to 4.5% last year, but Human Development Index is 73 out of 190 countries.

Despite having made significant progress on several human develop indicators, Sri Lanka continues to suffer in respect of food security and nutrition. According to the UN report, Global Hunger Index (GHI) and Global Food Security Index (GFSI) of Sri Lanka is 84, and 65 out of 118 and 113 countries, respectively.

Furthermore, Global Nutrition Report informs that Sri Lanka has among the highest wasting prevalence in the world; ranking 128 out of 130 countries, ~~and nutrition status among children aged 6-59 months and women have been recorded with poor indicators.~~ The challenge is not just to ensure food security and nutrition for an estimated 5.2 million people currently undernourished, but also to feed the additional 2.4 million people expected to inhabit the Island by 2050.

The main reasons behind ~~this~~ serious situation are urbanization, climate change and insufficient investments in R & D etc. If we look at urbanization, it coupled with more affordable and convenient fast-food outlets have contributed unnecessary demands on unhealthy and less nutritious food intake. The impact of changing food habits and that is reflected in increased obesity, and non communicable diseases. Another issue related to urbanization is labour outmigration and its negative impact on agriculture productivity.

The yield levels of domestically grown food crops including rice are not sufficient enough. On the other hand, the nominal price of all food commodities show an increasing trend, which leads poor households to limit their food consumption and shift to less nutritious diets. ~~One of the reason is inadequate intervention in R&D. This has restricted the potential of increasing domestic food supply in the country.~~

In this juncture I wish to say the Strategic importance of Science and Technology has continued to be recognized and emphasized by almost all national and global agenda on development over the past decades. Considering this fact last year along with other member states our country too witnessed the adoption of 3 major global agenda pertaining to sustainable development that placed major emphasize on Science, Technology and Innovation known as Paris agreement on Climate change and Sendai frame work for disaster risk reduction and 2030 agenda for 17 sustainable development goals. ~~We are~~ acutely aware of the crucial direct role for Science Technology and Innovation (STI) in at least 11 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

In this backdrop, our country is initiated and engaged in implementing several programmes through adopting positives. Some of them are,

- Making Sri Lanka free from poverty by 2030, “Grama Shakthi national programme” has been launched in 2017.
- With the support of FAO and WFP rice fortified project through multi-sector approach is being implemented which also promote nutrition education among community.
- Multi-sector Action Plan for food and nutrition has been developed through comprehensive consultative stakeholder discussion to achieve Zero Hunger by 2030.
- Improving non toxic agriculture cultivation programme by using organic fertilizer.

Besides, nowadays Sri Lanka witnessing the use of emerging technologies such as nanotechnology, biotechnology and space technologies finding their way to boosting agriculture, food and nutrition areas. These technologies help to improve local crop yields and climate resilient crop varieties, produced bio fertilizer, fortified food products and information on climate change patterns to the beneficiaries.

Use of advanced space technologies in monitoring and facilitating informed decision making is important. Thus, one of our institute is engaged in setting up of National Hub for receiving and distributing of earth observation data^s as well as drought monitoring system with UN support in Sri Lanka. One of the other research institute had developed and patented slow release fertilizer, which has the promising feature with lower requirement fertilizer and increase yield. And another research institute has developed a biofilm, biofertilizer where the concept in boosting soil ecology and enhancing plant productivity.

Even through Sri Lanka has a good policies and regulations on agriculture and nutrition, the food security and its objectives are yet to be achieved due to fragmented nature of approach. Currently government in the progress of developing national targets on this and sustainable development Act; which will provide the necessary legal frame work to establish a national policy and strategy on sustainable development ^{including} ~~including integration of environment,~~ economic and social targets for making decision.

Furthermore, we promote inclusive connectivity across the sectors and all social strata. Most of the programmes mainly focused on women participation and development in different fields. Meanwhile the coordinating framework was developed by our ministry for ensuring coordination between different ministries and organizations which include both private and public has been developed based on tripe bottom line concept and therefore include social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

More over,

UNDP Sri Lanka last year carried out the first national foresight conference where the Ministry of Science Technology and Research partnered. An outcome of this event is the establishment of a Social Innovation laboratory which will support dynamic citizen engagement and will enable better decision making and implementation.

Finally I would say, the Sri Lankan government is dedicated to meet poverty eradication and Zero hunger through various programmes and projects. However, being a middle-income level country it immensely requires the support of international community specially in the field of ~~developing and improving~~ new and emerging technology based R&D and technology transfers and ^{Best} ~~relevant~~ policy frame work. *SS*

Thus, CSTD can showcase STI initiatives taking place across various geographic regions and with proper evaluations can act as a catalyst in energizing other parties to emulate best practices. There is the need to provide a communication platform (easy to access and visible) by CSTD to members.

Thank You.