

## **Sustainable Development Goals**

Mr. Vice President

There were some questions on Sri Lanka's implementation of the SDGs, including how Sri Lanka envisages promoting synergies in implementing the UPR recommendations and the SDGs under the 2030 Agenda.

Sri Lanka is the first country in the Asia-Pacific Region to establish a Cabinet Ministry on Sustainable Development, and is among the few that has enacted a **Sustainable Development Act**. This demonstrates the political commitment and the high value and priority that Sri Lanka has placed on the implementation of the SDGs, and their expected outcomes.

The Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, in consultation with the National Planning Department has coordinated the process of integrating the SDGs into national development plans, especially in the economic sphere. With the intention of achieving the first SDG – i.e. no poverty – the Government of Sri Lanka declared 2017 as the year of alleviating poverty, and has launched a nation-wide People's Movement for poverty alleviation titled 'Gramashakthi'.

On a memorandum submitted by the President, to the Cabinet of Ministers, a Ministerial Committee and an Experts Committee was appointed to formulate the **National Sustainable Development Vision 2030** outlining strategies for achieving the SDGs.

The First Draft Report of the Experts Committee was presented to the President this month, November 2017. It identifies key issues and recommendations based on environmental, economic, and social pillars, encompassing key sectors such as education, agriculture and health, as well as cross-sectoral themes such as gender, reconciliation and harmony, and governance and institutions. The draft report, which takes into account the existing policies as well, will be peer reviewed and subjected to a **National Sustainable Dialogue** from January 2018 where it will undergo extensive **consultations** with the general public, politicians, academics, professionals and others covering all districts in Sri Lanka over a 5 month period.

Sri Lanka anticipates achieving the SDGs by 2030, working towards the provision of basic needs of the people, progressive alleviation of poverty, elimination of all forms of discrimination and inequalities, and establishing a society based on social justice and human security.

The Economic Policy of the Government outlines the vision setting the 'stage for a sustainable development journey'. The Policy aims to develop 'an

economy that will promote the benefits of development among all, an economy that will be friendly to all, beneficial to all, and an economy that will pave the way for sustainable development’.

The Sustainable Development Act referred to earlier was passed by the parliament on 03<sup>rd</sup> October 2017. The Act ensures that the National Policy and Strategy on Sustainable Development is prepared in conformity with the Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets, and shall be in force until the end of 2030. It also promotes the integration of environmental, economic and social factors in the making of all decisions by government.

The Act establishes **the Sustainable Development Council** which is the apex mechanism to look after matters pertaining to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in the country. The twelve member Council comprises official representation at the highest level as well as nominees from provincial councils appointed on a rotational basis. The Act, among other things, provides for environmental and social audits for new development projects.

The government recognises that the production of accessible, timely, and reliable disaggregated data, and building national statistical capacity are essential steps in the process of achieving SDGs.

In this regard, the Department of Census and Statistics which is the key institution of the National Statistical System of Sri Lanka, functioning under the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, has initiated the process of compiling national indicators for SDGs that are essential for measuring SDG outcomes at national and provincial levels.

As for the UPR recommendations, once the process concludes, the ongoing processes of dialogue and mechanisms set in place for the SDGs and 2030 agenda, will also take the UPR recommendations into consideration.