

Statement
by Hon. Nimal Siripala de Silva, MP
Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation
for the First World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul, Turkey, 23- 24 May 2016

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentleman,

At the outset, please allow me to convey my good wishes, on behalf His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka to the First World Humanitarian Summit host, Turkey for their invitation and the warm hospitality.

We as a global society, have made a huge advancement in development, commerce, technology, knowledge and in many other fields, thanks to the globalised connectivity that we enjoy today. Nonetheless, recognising the disparity in our advancement as a global society, World Leaders last year came together to set new targets to achieve minimum standard for society by endorsing the Sustainable Development Goals, a follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals .

In pursuing the task of SDG, countries have come across various challenges due to a number of factors, and among them, we consider humanitarian crisis that is created by man-made and natural disasters hold a vital share for exacting colossal human and economic toll. Therefore, the convening of this prestigious platform reflects our shared concern to disaster risk reduction, especially in light of recent disasters that has befallen in the world.

As you are aware, due to the extreme torrential rains and weather conditions that Sri Lanka currently has been experiencing this month, there have been flooding and landslides that have now affected over 225 Divisions in twenty-two of our Districts. This situation has resulted in nearly half a million being displaced and over two billion US dollar loss to properties. I understand that the rainfalls in the country recorded over the past week, has been the highest since 1992. Sri Lanka is thankful for the countries who have sent the messages of sympathy and extended their support for relief measures.

Therefore, my delegation considers that the deliberations we envisage at this conference are more relevant and timely, and the conclusion we arrive at this forum will guide us to take necessary measures through a collective decision to prevent and end suffering of many victims. In this respect, my delegation assures you, Mr. Chairman, our fullest support and cooperation in guiding the deliberations of this Forum to a fruitful conclusion.

Mr. Chairman,

We find that Secretary General's Agenda for Humanity provides a strategic framework to prevent and mitigate the humanitarian crisis. We believe that our action to implement the core responsibilities should be aligned with the UN Charter and the core principles and objectives that countries have already committed to achieve through the Sustainable Development Goals.

As you are aware in the past, Sri Lanka faced the brunt of a devastating Tsunami disaster and the severe impact of a thirty year armed conflict. The country overcame the humanitarian situation caused by

Tsunami and the armed conflict effectively, and restored normalcy. Sri Lanka succeeded in handling immediate post conflict challenges by taking swift action such as resettling of IDP's, restoring livelihood and initiating reconstruction. This was possible due to the collective support of government agencies, bilateral development partners, civil societies, and UN and International Organizations.

Following the election of President Maithripala Sirisena in last January 2015, the government has embarked on strengthening good governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The new government has also set its agenda for bringing economic development, judicial reforms and fighting corruption. The government has given high priority to achieve reconciliation and lasting peace in the country. Further, the Parliament has been made as the constitutional body for the purpose of adopting a new constitution. The new government's engagement with International Partners and UN has also taken a new dimension, including our cooperation with Human Rights Council.

The increased occurrence of disasters in the region not only threatens to roll back hard earned development gains, but the achievement of the development goals in the region. In respect to the core responsibilities related to natural disasters and climate change, we consider that it is the prime responsibility of the governments as humanitarian actors to serve the vulnerable members of the society, especially, women, children and elderly, who are in need of assistance. In this regard, Sri Lanka is committed to reaching out these vulnerable group members in times of crisis.

Further, it is paramount that the changes in approach is identified and act early on the identified risks as a concerted international effort. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are critical to reduce disaster risks which support the sustainable development process and targets of this Humanitarian Summit.

This International Summit can further foster our efforts to mitigate and adapt in a constructive manner setting action to achieve the ambitious targets. This requires joining hands internationally to link humanitarian activities with long term development. This can be further strengthened by reinforcing the national and local actors, while bringing reforms to the existing humanitarian systems.

Mr. Chairman, as our commitment, Sri Lanka has;

- Initiated development of a Preparedness and Contingency Plan for vulnerable districts and villages that are prone to natural hazards by 2020.
- GOSL has increased annual budget for Disaster Risk Reduction over the past five years, 0.65% in 2014, and hoping to further increase the commitment to 1% within the next three years.
- GoSL has established a Catastrophic Disaster Draw Down Option up to LKRS 102 Million in 2014, which is a financial tool to support the frontline response without interruption. In this context, Sri Lanka is committed to establish a fund to support the recovery programmes in the future.
- Sri Lanka has activated an insurance scheme to cover disasters caused by natural hazards under the Ministry of Disaster Management in 2016. The government has committed to bear a greater share of this scheme for the amount LKRS 300 Million (USD \$ 2 Million) as the annual premium. The total amount of the insurance scheme would be LKRS. 10 Billion (USD \$ 71 Million), of which has been allocated for emergency relief expenses. Furthermore, 85% of the total Scheme is reserved to cover property and content damages. The scheme further provides an accidental death cover for the victims of disaster and loss of life of fishermen when engaged in fishing.
- Has established a Development Policy Loan as a contingent Line of Credit with the World Bank as a disaster risk financing strategy. Sri Lanka will continue to explore the possibility of establishing a recovery fund to support major disasters.

- As a regional initiative, Sri Lanka has entered into an Agreement with SAARC to establish a Task Force to respond to disasters. As a response to this initiative, Sri Lanka already took part in search and rescue operations in major earthquakes in Japan and Nepal in the recent past.
- Sri Lanka will continue to facilitate the international obligations in disaster responses.

In pursuing our goals, we also look forward to have greater cooperation and support from our development partners for the implementations of the national strategies, priorities and needs with respect to building resilience, mitigation and adaptation.

Sri Lanka hopes this Summit will be able to come out with new ideas to ensure on how local, national, regional and international stakeholders can meet new challenges brought about by disasters and climate change.

Thank You.