

Statement of Hon. Naseer Ahamed
Minister of Environment of Sri Lanka
for the High Level Segment of COP15 Biodiversity Summit
held in Montreal, Canada from 7 - 19 December, 2022
to be delivered by
the High Commissioner in Canada

- Mr. President
- Excellencies
- Distinguished delegates

Good morning!

It is a great pleasure for me to deliver this statement on behalf of the government of Sri Lanka, which is a biodiversity hotspot.

Sri Lanka is endowed with a wide variety of ecosystems. It is one of the most biologically diverse countries in the Asian region. Despite its small size, Sri Lanka has a varied climate and topography, which has resulted in rich biodiversity in addition to having a high taxonomic diversity.

With a high degree of bio species multifariousness, Sri Lanka is also increasingly being subjected to biodiversity loss as reflected in the recently published National red lists. Out of 3,087 flora species 1,496 are threatened. 863 endemic flora species were recorded. 522 species of Avifauna were recorded and 244 of them were assessed. Among them 81 species are threatened. 97 Fresh water fish species were assessed out of which 61 species are endemic to Sri Lanka whereas 51 species are threatened.

Sri Lanka accepts that direct drivers of biodiversity loss are land/sea use change, overexploitation, climate change, pollution and invasive alien species which require regional level solutions. Apart from those direct and common drivers of biodiversity loss, Sri Lanka being an island state, we are also uniquely and increasingly influenced by transboundary air and marine pollution. This underscores the urgent need of having in place effective instruments and mechanisms of safeguarding biodiversity status quo of island nations like Sri Lanka. Such initiatives may be voluntary commitments or legally binding instruments. In this regard, we would like to recognize the Glolitter partnership to enhance regional cooperation to support transition of maritime transport and fisheries sectors towards a low plastics future. Also, we support the Regional Resource Center for Asia-Pacific of the AIT in their effort of revising the 'Male Declaration' on Control and Prevention of Air pollution and it's likely transboundary effects for South Asia.

Sri Lanka is always ready to stand with the international community for healthy and sustainable planet. We therefore, spearheaded the UN Global campaign on sustainable nitrogen management in 2019 addressing a major cause for biodiversity loss and habitat destruction. We also lead the Commonwealth countries as the champion of Mangrove Restoration. We supported the Kunming declaration to accelerate the actions towards achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.

In terms of high-level political ambitions, I would emphasize on the need to support sustainable co-existence of communities and ecosystems in terms of financial and capacity building interventions. 'Poverty' and 'livelihood-needs' are key social drivers negatively impacting biodiversity in developing countries such as Sri Lanka. We would like to be supported by the global initiatives which address these challenges.

In conclusion, Sri Lanka supports the upcoming Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework with more realistic and implementable national plans and we strengthen south-south, north-south and triangular cooperation in the coming decade.

I Thank you