



National Statement for UNEA-06
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

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Your Excellency Leila Benali, President of the Assembly
Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

Thank you honorable president for the floor.

I consider it as an honor to deliver the national statement in this august forum on behalf of my country, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

The symbiotic link between the environment and development is too important to be ignored. The notion that countries can achieve their growth targets, disregarding the environmental concerns, or that environmental concerns can be addressed once economic prosperity is achieved, needs rethinking.

This time, theme of UNEA 06, deals with the challenges faced by many nations across the globe in protecting the environment whilst attempting to achieve rapid economic development.

The Government of Sri Lanka and the United Nations Environment Programme jointly organized the fifth Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific in Colombo in October last year under the UNEA-6 theme 'Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution'. The Forum brought together over 474

delegates representatives of governments, intergovernmental and international organizations, and Major Groups and Other Stakeholders.

The Forum served as a crucial platform for the region's Environment Ministers and authorities to share perspectives on global and regional mechanisms and effective actions to achieve various multilateral environment agreement targets including SDG targets in Asia and the Pacific. The Forum provided space for delegates to share successes and suggested concrete actions towards achieving sustainable multilateral actions at national, subregional, and regional levels; outcome of the forum provided regional inputs to the UNEA-6 and CPR processes. During the forum, the children and youth raised a clear voice urging all governments for a clean and healthy environment and opportunities for their active participation in shaping a cleaner, healthier world.

Together with United Nations, Sri Lanka as the chair of the fifth Asia Pacific Forum wishes to work towards a future of sustained growth with minimal impact on nature. We firmly believe that the battle for the protection of environment must be hard fought on behalf of many future generations to come, and the mother Earth. Sri Lanka has mooted two resolutions in this year's Assembly.

The world is blessed with a convention to work on climate change. Yet, the majority of species from the Antarctic to the Arctic suffer from climate change. I firmly believe that it is the prime duty of our generation to bring about climate justice, **ensuring equitable access to all people and all countries, to conserve Earth's limited resources for generations to come. In this background, Sri Lanka's proposed resolution will be a platform for constructive and proactive engagements.**

The Tropical Belt, spanning 134 countries and encompassing 44% of the Earth's surface, is projected to house approximately 50% of the world's population by the 2030s. This region holds the majority of the world's remaining primary forests and coral reef systems, boasting rich biodiversity crucial for biological carbon sequestration and weather stability.

However, anthropogenic activities in the Tropical Belt pose a threat to its equilibrium. Large-scale investments in Renewable Energy, Pollution Control, and Nature-based Solutions are essential for transformative change, enhancing global carbon sequestration. Therefore, Sri Lanka intends to convene a panel in collaboration with other concerned nations to spearhead the Tropical Belt Initiative, disseminating a multisector plan not only throughout the tropical region, but worldwide.

H.E. the President of Sri Lanka proposed establishing an International Climate Change University for capacity building and advancing research. This initiative is crucial for contributing to the global efforts to combat climate change while addressing environmental concerns and promoting ecosystems conservation.

Excellencies,

As UNEA-04 decided, mangroves are one of the planet's most productive ecosystems and are now given due recognition. Sri Lanka is grateful to the United Nations for announcing Sri Lanka's mangrove programme as one of the seven UN World Restoration Flagships.

Reiterating the progress of UNEA 4, 5.2 resolution and the Colombo Declaration on sustainable nitrogen management, let me recall launching the UN global

campaign; “Nitrogen for Life” in Sri Lanka in 2019 and a number of initiatives across the world absorbed the ambition of the Colombo Declaration.

Excellencies,

I would like to draw your attention on **the consistency of multilateral environmental agreements in reaching their intended targets. In this regard, I wish to underscore an** issue of incompatibility of two conventions when it comes to environment conservation. For instance, Mobuild rays and shark species listed in CITES under Appendix II are listed in Appendix I of CMS (Convention on Migratory Species) where harvesting is prohibited except for scientific purposes aimed at enhancing propagation. Therefore, I humbly request UNEP to throw your attention on this matter.

We also believe that the edifice of sustainable development needs to be built upon the foundation of self-discipline and equity. We advocate the practice of the middle path at a personal, community, national and global level, in the belief that it can help create a better world for future generations and all living creatures in our planet.

The world must look at the environment in its spiritual aspect. We as humans have to open our minds, listen and understand the voice of nature.

Let me conclude by appreciating the United Nations Environment Programme for its efforts on the environment front as well as for the valuable support extended to Sri Lanka for better environment management. I wish this Assembly all the success.

Thank You!