

Country Statement - Sri Lanka

**The Second Session of the UN Habitat Assembly
5th to 9th June 2023 - Nairobi, Kenya**

***Addressed by the Head of delegation of Sri Lanka
Ambassador His Excellency Velupillai Kananathan
Permanent Representative of UN Habitat***

**Mr. President,
Executive Director of UN-Habitat
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

At the outset, on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, I would like to thank the UN-HABITAT for providing me the opportunity to address this distinguished gathering at the Second Session of the UN Habitat Assembly. I bring the greetings and good wishes of people in my country, for the success of this deliberations.

I am indeed delighted and honored to address you at this high-level forum of Governments, Heads of States, national leaders,

officials, mayors, pioneering entrepreneurs, policy and decision makers that sets the policy of the United Nations Human Settlements Program with the special theme of “ **A sustainable Urban Future through inclusive and effective multilateralism achieving Sustainable Development Goals in times of global crises.**

Mr. President,

The urban and human settlements dimensions of the 2030 agenda, the New Urban Agenda, and other global agendas places Housing at the Centre which will be instrumental to meet the growing needs of urbanization in a way that benefits all people.

In my own country Sri Lanka, we have reached to a critical milestone with numerous challenges brought about by the global pandemic following the economic crises. The government of Sri Lanka recognizes Housing and sustainable urbanization as a vital factor for economic growth. And so far we have taken positive steps to manage urban growth with a deep concern for the poor and the disadvantaged, keeping the policy to ensure integrated and inclusive development for all our citizens. However, we are still far from fully exploring and capitalizing on the positive aspects of

urbanization and its potential to contribute to sustainable human settlements development.

With the persisting challenges the Sri Lankan government is working towards the needs of all ethnic groups, religions and citizens of different socio-economic levels, particularly aiming at vulnerable groups based on gender, the differently-abled etc., without discrimination. to foster prosperity and quality of life for all.

Sri Lanka pioneered the people centered approach to housing. And way forward participatory development and enabling strategies have been practiced widely island-wide empowering the low income, marginalized & rural communities of all ethnic groups under the national housing program "Obata Geyak- Ratata Hetak" to build their own houses keeping to their values based on religious and cultural diversity, orchestrating family labor, community support and their own financial resources. This participatory, owner driven, affordable housing programs are promoted with the objective of the eradication of poverty, promoting inclusiveness, social cohesion and sustainable settlements.

Further, working on the said commitment, in Sri Lanka, it has been fashioned and developed into a reality in the form of a vibrant Public – Private Partnership concept to launch the middle Income Housing Development Program, as it is planned and implemented today, concentrates on the provision of housing, mainly in the form of affordable apartments, in and around nodal points close to express way exits and railway stations, facilitating speedy and easy access to urban work places. Even though the global pandemic and economic crisis have brought about numerous challenges, the programs are heading forward.

Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates,

We are taking the initiatives to strengthen the institutional, legal and regulatory framework for housing development by amending existing Laws, Acts, and Legislations, conducting island wide housing surveys to identify actual housing needs to cater the actual target groups thereby to achieve SDGs, enhance implementation of NUA (New Urban Agenda) and Good Governance. Amendments

to Condominium and Apartment ownership Acts, Rental Acts. Revising of Acts relating to land matters, formulation of Land Use Policy, ensuring land ownership and tenure rights. Introducing the Right to Information Act are such initiatives. Another major initiative taken is the decentralization of the decision making process in housing development through establishing housing committees in District, Divisional and Village level.

With the rapid urbanization and as a result of practices in modern construction, there is an urgent need to address the great challenges of the time such as: climate change, natural resource depletion, pollution, and energy demand. The built environment is accountable for a significant amounts of air, soil, water pollution and millions of tonnes of landfilled waste. Sri Lanka took steps to promote Green concepts as development of green building guidelines, rating systems and using of Green building codes etc. The National Construction Policy was launched to address these key issues. Furthermore, to promote environment friendly buildings the 'Green Building Guidelines & Rating Systems which provides for areas as: Energy Efficiency, Sustainable Site Planning and Management , Raw Materials & Resources Management, Indoor Environment Quality, Water Efficiency, Green Innovation, Social

and Cultural Compliance has been prepared. Initiatives are further taken to promote disaster resilient housing, improvements in building technology and material; likewise, many a programme has already been implemented in the areas of energy sector to promote green energy usage, national solar power promotion programs, eco-friendly vehicles, programs in solid waste management.

Mr. Prseident,

Distinguished delegates,

To conclude I would like to thank the Executive Director of the UN Habitat and the organizers of the forum for the excellent arrangements for holding this prestigious conference. We wish the deliberations a success. Thank You.