



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF SRI LANKA

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PRESS RELEASE

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SECRETARY-GENERAL

The United Nations Association of Sri Lanka (UNASL), which has been in existence for 70 years, has been monitoring the current Coronavirus (Covid 19) pandemic very closely.

Since its inauguration on 19th August 1950, the UNASL has worked with the many communities and religious as well as ethnic groups that form the Sri Lankan Nation.

We are deeply concerned about the alarming situation that this virus has created globally and especially in Sri Lanka, where the virus has been gaining momentum in the past few days, although at a low pace as compared to other countries in the region.

At the same time, we are extremely happy with the health management strategies been implemented for detection, quarantine and treatment and the fact that Sri Lanka has not had a single death at a result of the virus, which is something remarkable and which is attributed to the absolute commitment of the Health Sector of our Country. The systematic lock down is also highly commendable.

Let me take this opportunity to extend our grateful thanks and sincere gratitude to His Excellency Gotabaya Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Hon. Pavithra Wanniarachchi, Minister of Health, Dr. Anil Jayasinghe, Director General of Health Services, Lt. Gen Shavendra Silva, Head of National Operation Center for prevention of COVID 19 outbreak in Sri Lanka and Dr. Hemantha Herath, who are sphere heading this operation with the assistance and unstinted support of the Doctors, Nurses, Attendants, Public Health Staff, Minor Staff and Volunteers of the Department of Health Services, officials of the Ministry of Health, personnel of the Armed Forces and Police (including the Civil Defence Force), who are working round the clock, with great commitment, during this moment of National Crisis.

Our main focus should be to arrest the transmission of Covid 19, in order to save people from being infected with this pandemic. This has to be done by the people, basically adhering to the instructions and advice disseminated by the Health Authorities, otherwise the present situation could take a drastic change for the worse.

Let us be mindful that the collapse of the market for personal protective equipment has created extreme difficulties to ensure that health workers have access to the equipment they need to do their jobs safely and effectively. Nevertheless, we have seen that the government of Sri Lanka has made all arrangements to provide these protective equipment which is also highly commendable.

The WHO is working actively to support all countries and especially those that need support the most. The supply of Covid 19, diagnostic kits is an important area that the WHO is engaged in. It is reported that there are many companies that produce these diagnostic kits but WHO only recommends kits that have been evaluated independently, to ensure their quality and towards this end they are working closely with the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics – to contract additional labs to evaluate new diagnostics kits.

Whilst we understand the heavy financial toll this pandemic is taking on businesses and the economy, we are encouraged by the solidarity and generosity of business leaders to use their resources, experience and networks to improve the availability of supplies, facilities, communicate reliable information and protect their staff and customers.

In addition to the major role played by the WHO to increasing access to masks, gloves, gowns and tests, they are also increasing access to the evidence-based technical guidance countries and health workers need, to save lives.

WHO has published guidelines for Health Ministers, Health System Administrators, and other decision-makers, to help them provide life-saving treatment as health systems are challenged, without compromising the safety of health workers.

The UNA-Sri Lanka, appeals and urges the General Public and all civic minded people of our country to extend their fullest co-operation to the Authorities in order to put an end to the transmission of this pandemic and eliminate it completely.

Everyone is aware that this pandemic has brought about a dramatically changing pattern in the lives of many people with schools and offices being closed, daily wage earners not having an income, resulting in severe hardship and so on. This is an opportunity where non-governmental organizations could come forward to help these less fortunate people without leaving it to the government to take over this burden as well, although one may question that the government has a responsibility to do so. The government is tasked with a bigger responsibility of controlling and eliminating this pandemic.

Further, during this difficult time, it's important that everyone continues looking after their physical and mental health. This will not only help in the long-term, it will also help you fight COVID-19, if you get it. It is also important that one needs to strengthen his/her immune system to ensure that it functions properly.

Please adhere to some of the good practices that are detailed below:

- Limit your alcohol consumption, and avoid sugary drinks.
- Don't smoke. Smoking can increase your risk of developing severe disease if you become infected with COVID-19.
Exercise - WHO recommends 30 minutes of physical activity per day for adults, and one hour a day for children.
- If you're working from home, make sure you don't sit in the same position for long periods. Get up and take a 3-minute break every 30 minutes.
- Look after your mental health. It's normal to feel stressed, confused and scared during a crisis. Talking to people you know and trust can help.
- Supporting other people in your community can help you as much as it does them. Check in on neighbours, family and friends. Compassion is a medicine.
- Listen to music, read a book or play a game.
- Try not to read or watch too much news if it makes you anxious. Get your information from reliable sources once or twice a day.
- To increase access to reliable information, WHO has worked with WhatsApp and Facebook to launch a new WHO Health Alert messaging service.
This service will provide the latest news and information on COVID-19, including details on symptoms and how to protect yourself.
- The Health Alert service is now available in English and will be introduced in other languages shortly.
To access it, send the word "hi" to the following number on WhatsApp: +41 798 931 892.
More information available on the WHO website.

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