

# ANNUAL

# 2019

## United Nations Association of Sri Lanka

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**H. E. António Guterres**  
**The Secretary General**  
**Address to 74<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly**  
**24<sup>th</sup> September 2019**



*Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The United Nations Charter sends a clear message to us all: put people first. The first words of the Charter -- “we the peoples” – are a summons to place people at the centre of our work. Every day. Everywhere. People with anxieties and aspirations. People with heartbreaks and hopes. Above all, people with rights. Those rights are not a favour to be rewarded or withheld. They are an endowment for simply being human. Across the first half of my mandate, I have had the good fortune to meet people around the world – not in gilded meeting rooms, but where they live and work and dream. And I have listened. I have heard families in the South Pacific who fear their lives being swept away by rising seas... Young refugees in the Middle East yearning for a return to school and home... Ebola survivors in North Kivu struggling to rebuild their lives... Women demanding equality and opportunity...

People of all beliefs and traditions who suffer simply because of who they are. And so many others. We are living in a world of disquiet. A great many people fear getting trampled, thwarted, and left behind. Machines take their jobs. Traffickers take their dignity. Demagogues take their

rights. Warlords take their lives. Fossil fuels take their future. And yet people believe in the spirit and ideas that bring us to this Hall.

They believe in the United Nations. But do they believe in us? Do they believe as leaders, we will put people first? Because we, the leaders, must deliver for we, the peoples. People have a right to live in peace. One year ago in this room, I spoke of winds of hope despite the chaos and confusion of our world. Since then, some of those currents continued to move in promising directions. Against the expectations of many, elections unfolded peacefully in Madagascar, the Maldives, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to name just a few. Greece and the Republic of North Macedonia resolved their decades-long name dispute. Political dialogue in Sudan and the peace process in the Central African Republic have brought renewed hope. And a long-sought step forward has just been taken on the political path out of the tragedy in Syria, and in line with Security Council resolution 2254.

As I announced yesterday, an agreement has been reached with all parties [involved] for a credible, balanced and inclusive Syrian - owned and Syrian -led Constitutional Committee. My Special Envoy just left Damascus after finalizing the last details with the Government and the Opposition. The United Nations looks forward to convening the Committee in Geneva in the coming weeks.

## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

Across the global landscape, we see conflicts persisting, terrorism spreading and the risk of a new arms race growing. Outside interferences, often in violation of Security Council resolutions, make peace processes more difficult. And so many situations remain unresolved, from Yemen to Libya to Afghanistan and beyond. A succession of unilateral actions threatens to torpedo a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine. In Venezuela, four million people have fled the country -- one of the largest displacements in the world. Tensions are elevated in South Asia, where differences need to be addressed through dialogue. And above all, we are facing the alarming possibility of armed conflict in the Gulf, the consequences of which the world cannot afford. The recent attack on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities was totally unacceptable. In a context where a minor miscalculation can lead to a major confrontation, we must do everything possible to push for reason and restraint. I hope for a future in which all the countries of the region can live in a state of mutual respect and cooperation, without interference in each other's affairs – and I hope equally that it will still be possible to preserve the progress on nuclear non-proliferation represented by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. From day one, I have emphasized prevention, mediation and a surge in diplomacy for peace to address the crises we face. Consider the lives we can save by intensifying our investments to sustain peace around the world. Across some of the most troubled corners of the world, some 100,000 UN peacekeepers protect civilians and promote peace. Through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, we are strengthening our effectiveness and efficiency and we are renewing partnerships with troop- and police-contributing countries, host countries and regional organizations such as the African Union and the European Union. I am also proud of the work of our humanitarians easing suffering around the world. Fully half of all

international relief aid is channeled through the United Nations – ensuring that millions receive protection, food, medicine, shelter, water and other life-saving forms of assistance.

This year alone, in brutal attacks and other circumstances, we have lost at least 80 peacekeepers, humanitarians and others, all of whom gave their lives serving the United Nations trying to better the lives of others. I honour their service and their sacrifice. We have bolstered our counter-terrorism architecture and defined new strategies to tackle violent extremism and address root causes while respecting human rights. And I have put forward a new disarmament agenda to Advance global peace.

In the near term, the “New Start” agreement must be extended; we must work to address the heightened threat posed by ballistic missiles; and ensure a successful 2020 Review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The situation on the Korean Peninsula remains uncertain. I fully support the efforts towards a new summit between the President of the United States and the leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. And at this time of transition and dysfunction in global power relations, there is a new risk looming on the horizon that may not yet be large, but it is real. I fear the possibility of a Great Fracture: the world splitting in two, with the two largest economies on earth creating two separate and competing worlds, each with their own dominant currency, trade and financial rules, their own internet and artificial intelligence capacities, and their own zero sum geopolitical and military strategies. We must do everything possible to avert the Great Fracture and maintain a universal system – a universal economy with universal respect for international law; a multipolar world with strong multilateral institutions. People have a right to security in all its dimensions. Every measure to uphold human rights helps deliver

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sustainable development and peace. In the 21st century, we must see human rights with a vision that speaks to each and every human being and encompasses all rights. Economic. Social. Cultural. Political. Civil. It would be a mistake to ignore or diminish economic, social and cultural rights. But it would be equally misguided to think that those rights are enough to answer people's yearnings for freedom. Human rights are universal and indivisible. One cannot pick and choose, favouring some while disdaining others. People have a right to well-being and dignified standards of life. With health, housing and food. Social protection and a sustainable environment. Education – not only to learn things but to learn how to learn and prepare for the future. And decent jobs, especially for young people. These rights permeate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. And they are among our best tools for preventing conflict. Yet we are not on track. Inequality is exploding. Our global economy generates great flows of income, but this prosperity is captured by a small number of elites. It is a sad fact of our world today that one's chances of leading a life free of want and in full human dignity still depend more on the circumstances of one's birth than one's innate capacities. Today's Sustainable Development Goals Summit -- and Thursday's dialogue on financing – are opportunities to ramp up ambition, including by utilizing the promise of technology and innovation as recommended by the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation that has concluded his report.

As was emphasized at yesterday's Climate Action Summit, the climate emergency is a race we are losing – but it is a race we can win if we change our ways now. Even our language has to adapt: what once was called “climate change” is now truly a “climate crisis” ... and what was once called “global warming” has more accurately become “global heating”. We are seeing unprecedented temperatures, unrelenting

storms and undeniable science. Ten days ago in the Bahamas, I saw the ruin caused by Hurricane Dorian. That aftermath is a mere prelude to what science tells us is on its way. But something else is on its way – solutions. The world is starting to move – not yet fast enough but move in the right direction -- away from fossil fuels and towards the opportunities of a green economy. The Climate Summit highlighted some of the solutions we need to scale up in order to dramatically reduce emissions, keep temperature rise to 1.5 degrees and reach carbon neutrality by 2050. But we are not yet there.

We must build on this momentum, and do much more to be able to defeat climate change. People have a right to the fundamental freedoms that every country has promised to uphold. Yet today, we are at a critical juncture where advances made across the decades are being restricted and reversed, misinterpreted and mistrusted. We see wide-ranging impunity, including for violations of international humanitarian law. New forms of authoritarianism are flourishing. Civic space is narrowing. Environmental activists, human rights defenders, journalists and others are being targeted. And surveillance systems expand their reach day by day, click by click, camera by camera, encroaching on privacy and personal lives. These breaches go beyond the breakdown in rules governing the behavior of states and businesses. They are also playing out at a deeper level, shredding the fabric of our common humanity. At a time when record numbers of refugees and internally displaced people are on the move, solidarity is on the run. We see not only borders, but hearts, closing -- as refugee families are torn apart and the right to seek asylum torn asunder. We must reestablish the integrity of the international refugee protection regime, and fulfil the promises of responsibility-sharing set out in the Global Compact on Refugees. We must also build on the landmark adoption of the first-ever Global Compact on

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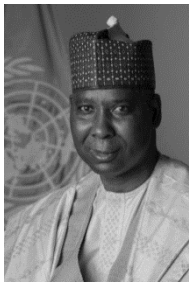
Migration last December. That means strengthening international cooperation for safe, orderly and regular migration, and countering the smugglers and criminals who enrich themselves on the backs of vulnerable people. All migrants must see their human rights respected. Around the world, alienation and distrust are being weaponized. Fear is today's best-selling brand. That is why I launched two initiatives. First, a UN system-wide strategy to tackle hate speech. Second, an action plan to support efforts to safeguard religious sites and uphold the right to religious freedom. Religious, ethnic and other minorities must fully enjoy their human rights. That requires a strong investment in social cohesion to ensure diverse communities feel that their identities are respected and that they have a stake in society as a whole. To those who insist on oppression or division, I say: diversity is a richness, never a threat. It is unacceptable in the 21st century for women and men to be persecuted because of their identity, belief or sexual orientation. We must also secure the rights of vulnerable and marginalized people. This year I launched the first United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. And, of course, the world's most pervasive manifestation of discrimination affects fully half of humankind: women and girls. Let's never forget gender equality is a question of power. And power still lies overwhelmingly with men – as we see from parliaments to boardrooms, and even this week in the halls, corridors and meeting rooms of the United Nations. We will shift the balance when we truly see women's rights and representation as our common goal. That is why I have worked to ensure gender parity at the United Nations, together with regional balance. Today we have achieved parity in my Senior Management Group and among those who lead UN work at

the country level. I will not let up until we have reached gender parity at all levels at the UN -- and full equality for women and girls around the world. That means continuing to push back against the pushback against women's rights. It means calling out a troubling commonality in terrorist attacks, extremist ideologies and brutal crimes: the violent misogyny of the perpetrators. And it means stepping up our efforts to expand opportunity. At present trends, it will take two centuries to close the gap in economic empowerment.

We cannot accept a world that tells my granddaughters that equality must wait for their granddaughters' granddaughters. As we continue all this vital work and more, I have launched ambitious reforms to make the United Nations more effective. I count on you to place our organization on sound financial footing. In an ever more divided world, we need a strong United Nations. Next year we will mark the 75th anniversary of the United Nations -- a critical moment to renew our common project. The problems we face are real. But so is hope. As we strive to serve people, we also can be inspired by people. Over the past two and a half years, I have spent time with young African girls learning to code... With teachers equipping young people with new skills for the future... With entrepreneurs in many fields leading the world, innovation by innovation, into the green economy. They and so many others are helping to build the future we want. Their aspirations and their human rights must always be our touchstone. We are here to serve. We are here to advance the common good while upholding our shared humanity and values. That vision united the founders of our Organization. At a time of division today, we must re-connect with that spirit. Let us restore trust, rebuild hope and move ahead, together.

Thank you.

**His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande**  
**President of the Seventy Fourth Session of the**  
**United Nations General Assembly**



**On June 4 2019, the United Nations General Assembly elected the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations as President of its upcoming 74th session.**

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande has had an outstanding career as a scholar and diplomat. He received a BSc (Political Science) from Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria (1979); an MA (Political Science) from Boston University, United States of America (1981); and a PhD (Political Science) from University of Toronto, Canada (1987).

He started his academic career at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Nigeria, rising from Graduate Assistant in 1980 to full Professor in 1998, and ultimately to Vice-Chancellor, in 2004, a position he held for five years. During his tenure as Vice Chancellor, the University, with about 20,000 full-time students in various faculties, ranked first in the accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities (2007).

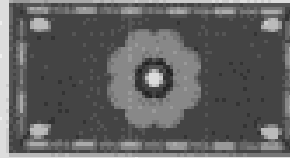
Between 2000 and 2004, Professor Mohammad-Bande served as Director-General of Le Centre Africain de Formation et de Recherche Administratives pour le Développement (CAFRAD), in Tangiers, Morocco. Established by African governments in 1964, CAFRAD is the continent's premier intergovernmental Centre for governance reform. Under his stewardship, the Centre improved much-needed training for senior African public servants, conducted specialized research on African governance issues, and worked with a variety of partners, in particular

the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations. From 2010 to 2016, he held the position of Director-General of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Nigeria's most reputable policy institution for training leaders from the public and private sectors, including high echelon officials of Nigeria's Armed Forces. In that capacity, he inspired a marked improvement in the quality of the Institute's programming and activities. One of his signature initiatives in that regard was the establishment of the Political Parties Policy and Leadership Development Centre, the first of its kind in Africa.

As Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (2018-2019), Professor Mohammad-Bande worked with colleagues from all regions of the world to achieve common objectives. He served as Vice-President of the 71st session of the General Assembly and was active in several forums, including as Chair of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34), Member of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, and Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Group.

Professor Muhammad-Bande was an assessor for the National Merit Award (Nigeria) and for professorial positions in universities. He has won merit awards and honours from institutions and governments, including the Government of the United States of America and the Government of China. Most notably, he was named Officer of the Order of the Federal Republic (OFR), one of Nigeria's highest national honours.

He is married with four children, and his hobbies include swimming, soccer, field hockey, farming and music.



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இலங்கை சனாதிபதி  
President of Sri Lanka

### Message

I am pleased to send this message to the United Nations Association of Sri Lanka (UNASL), on the occasion of the commemoration the 74<sup>th</sup> United Nations Day.

It is noteworthy that the UNASL, founded in 1950, was admitted as a member of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) in 1951, five years before Sri Lanka became a member of the United Nations, in December, 1955.

The UNASL has continued to work towards fulfilling its objectives and creating better awareness of the significance of the United Nations and the functions of the UN system.

Further, the UNSAL Study Circle operating in schools islandwide over the years, with the approval of the Ministry of Education, is highly commendable. The activities provided through this programme which include seminars, lectures, educational sessions, interschool competitions, awareness on drug abuse, protection of the environment, non-communicable diseases with special emphasis on diabetes and promoting the sustainable development goals are greatly beneficial to students who would eventually be the future leaders of our nation.

It is also important to reflect on the relations between Sri Lanka and the UN over the years, from the outset, Sri Lanka has been a very active member of the United Nations.

The cooperation between Sri Lanka and the UN over a wide range of matters has been mutually beneficial and contributed positively to achieving greater peace and prosperity for Sri Lanka and her people. Another matter of great significance is that Sri Lankans have played an important role in the UN system over the years while our armed forces have contributed substantially towards UN peace keeping efforts.

I extend my warm felicitations and best wishes to the United Nations Association of Sri Lanka and for its continued service.

Maithripala Sirisena

October 17, 2019



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இலங்கை சனநாயக சோசலிச குடியரசு  
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

**Maj. Gen. Upul Perera**

**President**

**United Nations Association of Sri Lanka**

**Message on the National Observance of the 74<sup>th</sup> United Nations Day**



United Nations Day marks the anniversary of the UN Charter's entry in to force and celebrates everything that the UN represents and has achieved since its establishment in 1945. UN Day has traditionally been marked throughout the world with meetings, discussions and exhibits about the achievements and goals of the organization.

At this historic juncture, when the UN celebrates its 74<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, United Nations Association of Sri Lanka (UNASL) is focused mainly on to the theme of UN Day 2019; "Climate Action for Peace" which draws attention to the importance of combatting climate change as a way to protect and promote peace throughout the world. UNASL which had been appointed as an official 'UN Peace Messenger' in 1987 by then Secretary General of United Nations has been conducting the National Observance of UN Day in an unbroken chain of 70 years in collaboration with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNDP with the participation of school Children Island wide.

Many activities have been planned by UNASL in this year too focusing the theme of UN Day 2019 of them some have already been completed with fruitful results. Tree Planting Campaign and Speech Contest on 'Air Pollution' were two grand events, among many others, concluded so far in this year with the participation of schools of the Study Circle, another project that has been launched in 1981 and successfully carried on every year, that add value towards the theme of UN Day 2019.

Apart from combatting Climate Action, UNASL is also currently engaged in working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals declared by UN, the gigantic project that is expected to be completed by 2030. Tree Planting Campaigns, Health Camps, Teacher Training along with many other projects are already placed in the annual calendar of events of UNASL for implementation during the next half of the year.

I take this opportunity, on-behalf of the membership of UNASL, to pay my sincere gratitude to the UN Representative and officials of United Nations and affiliated UN Organizations in Sri Lanka for their unstinted support extended, members of the Diplomatic Corps, officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all others who contributed towards the success of UNASL.

It is with loads of thankfulness I respectfully recall the committed support extended voluntarily by the members of the Executive Committee of UNASL which is highly valued with sense of gratitude.

**MAJ GEN UPUL PERERA (rtd) USP**

MBA, MSc, PGDCPS, FIM(SL), FIAE(SL), FIMI(UK), MISMM(SL)

PRESIDENT



**Mr. Errol Smith**  
**Secretary General**  
**United Nations Association of Sri Lanka**  
**Message on the National Observance of the 74<sup>th</sup> United Nations Day**



I am happy to send this message when the United Nations Association of Sri Lanka (UNASL) commemorates the 74<sup>th</sup> United Nations Day National Observance, which also marks the 69<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations Association in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

The United Nations Association of Sri Lanka (UNASL) was established on the 19<sup>th</sup> August, 1950, five years before Sri Lanka was admitted as a Member State of the United Nations on 14<sup>th</sup> December, 1955, together with 15 other countries

UNASL was admitted as the sole National Affiliate of the World Federation of United Nations Association (WFUNA), in 1951, joining the rest of the world comprising over 100 member countries, in hosting seminars, lectures, educational sessions and inter-school competitions throughout the country, thus creating a better understanding among communities.

The year under review has been a very exciting year full of activity and we have been able to strengthen the UNASL Study Circle as well as address many areas such as environmental protection, non-communicable diseases, gender equality, tree planting and climate change and also focusing on the 17 Sustaining Development Goals.

A noteworthy achievement is the setting up of a computer training center with 12 computers at the UNASL Secretariat premises, with the assistance of the UNA-China and many other donors who generously contributed to this great cause. The center is now fully functional, catering to those who cannot afford to pay colossal sums of money for computer training.

Let me acknowledge the co-operation and assistance received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Nations Organisation and the United Nations Information Center, which has been very encouraging.

We are in the process of revamping the Diplomatic Membership of the UNASL comprising Ambassadors and High Commissioners accredited to Sri Lanka, in order to strengthening our ties and relationships.

The Executive Committee of the UNASL consist of a vibrant team of volunteers who are highly committed and dedicated and I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank each and every one of them for their unstinted support and cooperation in all activities.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not express a word of gratitude to the entire membership of UNSAL, including all Special Life, Life, Annual, Honorary and Corporate Members, as well as the students and teachers of our 326 Study Circle Schools island wide, for their active participation and contribution in numerous ways in promoting and propagating the United Nations, in Sri Lanka.

It is pertinent to remember with gratitude and pay a glowing tribute to the Founder of the UNA-Sri Lanka, the late Mr. Kumaran Fernando, for his great initiative, commitment and dedication towards the ideals of the United Nations.

**ERROL SMITH**  
**SECRETARY-GENERAL**

**Mr. Dharmadasa Vitharanage**  
**Editor**  
**United Nations Association of Sri Lanka**



## Highlight of the History of UN Association of Sri Lanka (1950 – 2019)

The United Nations Association of Sri Lanka (UNASL) is entering the seventh decade after it was established as a People's Organization five years before Sri Lanka was admitted to the United Nations. The inaugural meeting of the United Nations Association of Ceylon was held at 'Sravasti' meeting hall in 1950, Major Montague Jayawickrema, M. P. Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Defence & Foreign Affairs was unanimously elected as its first President and Yogendra Duraiswamy as its first Secretary General.

His Excellency the Right Honorable Hereward Ramsbotham, the Governor – General was graciously pleased to accept office as the first Patron, while Prime Minister the Right Honorable D. S. Senanayaka, became its Chief Vice Patron. This practice became a firmly established tradition and has continued unbroken to this day.

In 1951, the new association gained admission to the WFUNA – the World Federation of United Nations Associations – which had replaced the League of Nations Union – as a national affiliate. The WFUNA, which had been founded in 1946, became the chief voluntary promoter of the United Nations among the People's of the World. Other national UNAs were admitted to the WFUNA, include in the Ceylon.

Senator the honourable Dr. M. V. P. Peiris, succeeded the first president of the UNA and continued until 1970, Nihal Jayewickrame,

(Secretary, Ministry of Justice) continued as secretary General until 1976.

The new Secretary – General got together a small team to help him. They were, among others Kumaran Fernando, Dharmadasa Vitharana, Brigadier Granville Elapata, a serving army Officer, Ms. Verna Karunatileke, and Lakshman Ranathunga all mercantile employees who remain supporters to this day. They were followed later by Henry Karunaratne (now deceased) Shelton Peiris and I. U. Wijekulasooriya. In 1978, Y. Duraiswamy was elected as its new President. Friendly relations were then established with the UNAs of the Soviet Union, India, Poland, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Canada and Japan.

Mr. Kumaran Fernando who assumed duties in July 1976 as the Secretary General and the Chief Executive Officer of UNASL was the live wire in almost all programmes and projects and those were highly recognized by WFUNA.

In 1995, the Foreign Ministry set up a National Committee to organize the UN50 celebrations to mark the golden jubilee of the founding of the United Nations and invited the UNASL to serve on the committee as the sole NGO. On a proposal accepted by the National Committee and the UN50 Secretariat in New York allocated more than half the required amount. The entire balance was met by the Seylan Bank and with the Cooperation of the Railway Department the whole project was successfully conducted over a period of four months. It was declared open at

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the Fort Railway Station by the then Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar.

The fiftieth anniversary or golden jubilee of the UNASL was held in 2000 with a message from UN Secretary – General Kofi Annan who said “Since its birth in 1950, the UNA of Sri Lanka has been a valuable ally of the United Nations – a two – way link between the Organization and the people it serves. As long as there are people like you willing and able to dedicate themselves the betterment of all, there is hope”

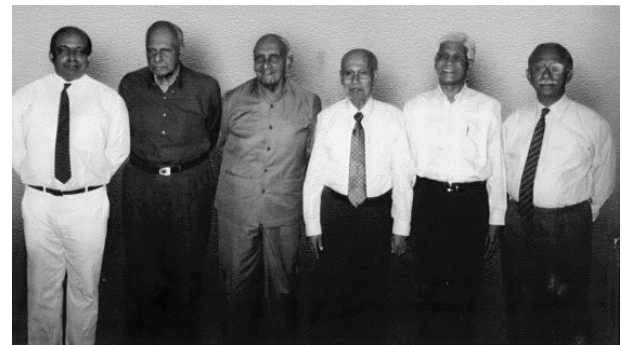
In 2004, the UNA proposed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that a National Committee be set up to mark the golden jubilee of Sri Lanka’s Admission to the UN. The proposal was accepted by Foreign Minister Kadirgamar and the Committee established under the Chairmanship of the Deputy Foreign Minister, Professor Wiswa Warnapala.

Many distinguished citizens enjoying high public standing came forward to support the UNASL and remain unwaveringly loyal to the Association to this day. Among the distinguished personalities who became Life Members and are still with us with two exceptions, 30 years later, are Desamanya Ambassador Dr. Gamini Corea, Desamanya Ambassador Dr. Vernon Mendis, Desamanya Ambassador Nissanka Wijewardena, Desabandu Dr. Hudson Silva, Desabandu Dr. Shiran Deraniyagala. Dr. Kim Hak – Su, currently a UN Under – Secretary – General and Executive Director of UNESAP and Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, former Under Secretary – General for Disarmament Affairs of the UN and a leading Contender for the world’s top job of UN secretary – General in 2006, Desamanya Ambassador Neville Kanakaratne, Rienzie T. Wijetilleke ( one of Sri Lanka’s best known Bankers and Chairman of the Hatton National Bank) and Mrs. Rohini Nanayakkara (former General Manager, Bank of Ceylon), Prof. Lakshman Marasinghe and Ambassador S. A. C. M. Zuhyle.

UNASL currently has over 1700 members, comprising special life, annual, honorary and corporate members as well as 325 schools (reaching about 165,000 students) registered under an island wide UNASL Study Circles programme. The Head Office of UNASL is located at 39/1, Cyril Jansz Mawathth at Panadura in the premises donated by late Mr. Kumaran Fenando former Secretary General.

## **Several Past Presidents of the UNASL**

**Desabandu Dr. Siran Deraniyagala, Desabandu Ambassador Dr. Vernon Mendis, Desamanya Ambassador Dr. Gamani Corea, Desamanya Ambassador Nissanka Wijewardene, Present President Rienzie T. Wijetilleke and Ambassador General Cyril Ranathunga**



## **Programmes and Projects**

### **National Observance of the UN Day**

National Observance of the UN Day was held in an unbroken chain of 65 years with the distinguished participation of Ministers, members of the Diplomatic corps, UN representatives, Members of UNASL, Teachers and Students from many Study Circles of UNASL. The outstanding features of these ceremonies have been giving opportunities to students to showcase their talents in the presence of a large audience. Key note address is delivered by a student. Cultural items have been presented by students at these ceremonies. Awards have also been distributed to the best teachers in charge of Study Circles, the winners

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and runners up of speech contests, Quiz competitions, essay writing contests etc.

### **The Schools Study Circle Programme**

UNASL Study Circle project was launched in 1981 with a view to educating student population on UN and its activities. This project was converted into a programme in 1990 with the formal approval of the Education Minister Lalith Athulathmudali, who too had been in his student days a Founder Member of the UNASL in 1950, and was only too happy to give the project his blessing and instruct the Ministry officials to issue a general circular to all secondary schools to establish UNASL Study Circles and deal directly with the UNASL. Today in 2019, with more than 325 secondary schools on its register and constituting the largest ongoing activity. Y. Y. Kim the then UNDP Resident Representative and Director of the UN Information Center in Colombo, extended his support by offering a UNDP vehicle with driver and fuel for the Study Circle Mobile Unit to visit a Member School once or twice a month or for an overnight stay involving two days.

Study Circles play a significant role in mobilizing the good work of UN in the school and parents of school children. These study circles promote leadership skills, organizing ability, oratory, knowledge etc among students. Once a year the UNASL selects and give awarded the best study circles considering their activities viz conducting meetings, observance of UN days, contribution to sustainable development, creative skills etc.

### **Kanagawa art Exhibition.**

UNASL forwards Artworks of children from Study Circles of 4 – 15 years to the 20<sup>th</sup> Kanagawa Biennial World Children's Art Exhibition conducted by the Japan Overseas Cooperative Association (JOCA). We are happy to announce that a number of awards have been won by students of Study Circles who have

submitted their art works through us. These awards have been presented at the National Observance of the UN Day.

### **Assistance in crisis situations**

UNASL has come to the aid of people from different parts of Sri Lanka who were crisis affected. For example we have assisted those who were devastated by tsunami of 26 December 2004. The recent (2017) torrential rains in Sri Lanka resulted in severe flooding and landslides in Sabaragamuwa Province. The UNASL provided educational equipment which had been damaged and needs replacement.

### **Regional Conferences**

UNASL conducted a number of regional conferences in order to educate and exchange views with teachers and students in Study Circles. Such regional conferences were conducted in Badulla, Matale, and Galle districts.



Planting on World environment Day

### **Observance of international days**

The United Nations designates specific days to mark particular events or topics in order to promote, through awareness and action, the objectives of the Organization. Usually, UNASL observeS World Environment Day, International Day of Peace, World Teachers Day etc with The Study Circles.

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### **Provision of spectacles**

Persons who have visual impairment were detected at the screening programme at conducted eye climate examination by an Eye Specialist and his team and appropriate treatment given. Spectacles were provided with no cost to the patient. This programmes were carried out in collaboration with Lions Club.

### **Teacher Training and Public Lectures**

With a view to improving awareness of teachers of Study Circles and the public on the UN and current issues of the country public lectures have been arranged by the UNASL. UN Information Centre assisted in various ways in conducting teacher training programmes.

### **Computer Training Center**

UNASL has launched a programme aimed at improving the knowledge of the general public, specially school leavers, through Information Technology.

A Computer Training Centre has been established and suitable IT courses have been designed for this purpose. In order to provide an awareness on the importance of IT, a Seminar was conducted on 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2018 at the UNASL Secretariat, Cyril Jansz Mawatha, Panadura. Almost 40 participants were present. The welcome address was made by Mr. Dharmadasa Vithrana, Editor UNASL, whilst Mr. Maduranga Liyanarachchi, who has been selected as the Lecturer of IT delivered a lecture on the "Importance of IT in the Modern World". He emphasized that in the present context IT or knowledge of computer application was an absolute necessity.

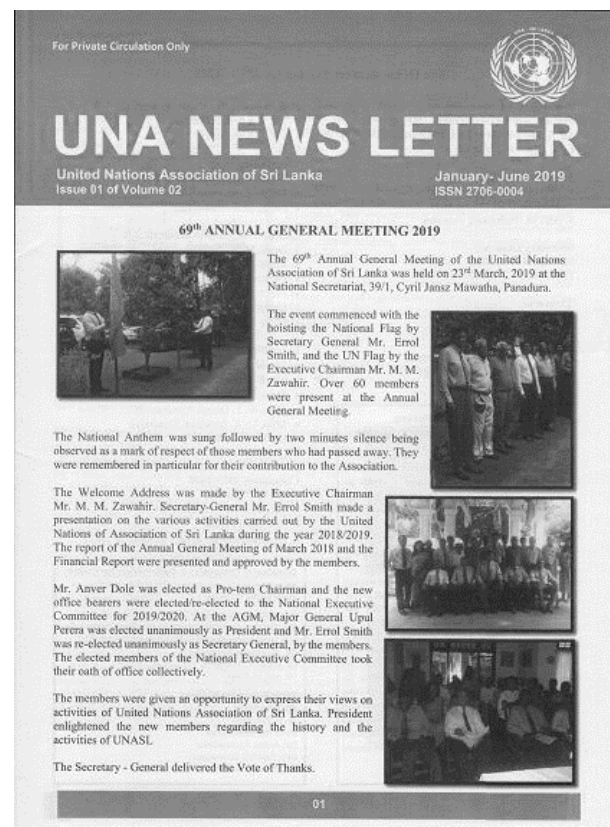
### **Newsletter**

In order to improve awareness of members, teachers and students on UN and activities of UNASL aby-annually a Newsletter is

distributed to all members and Study Circles. Notices, and plans of UNASL, activities of Study Circles, articles on health, current local and world affairs, human rights etc are included in this Newsletter.

Through the numerous activities carried out by the UNASL, there are ample opportunities to reflect on the success and challengers of the common people as well as to consider the significant accomplishments the organization has contributed to maintaining peace and security, promoting human rights and democracy, providing solutions to environment issues, the alleviation of poverty and economic development.

The UNASL is moving forward as a organization through the tremendous commitment of its volunteers talking the message of the United Nations to the grassroots of Sri Lanka with the co-operation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme in Sri Lanka which include the United Nations Information Center.



## The Activities of the UNASL during the year 2018 - 2019

The activities of the UNASL during the year 2018-2019

UNASL conducted its activities for the 73<sup>rd</sup> year under the guidance of the National Executive Committee. Highlight of activities are indicated below.

### 1. National Observance of the 73<sup>rd</sup> United National Day.

United Nations Association of Sri Lanka conducted the National Observance of the 73<sup>rd</sup> United National Day at a function at Hotel Ramadia in Moratuwa on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2018 with the distinguished participation of Ms. Razia Pendse, (Acting Ambassador of UNO Sri Lanka) as the Chief Guest. In addition to that, Dr. Idunil Liyanage, District Manager of Bank of Ceylon, Mr. Chandana Weerakkodi, Manager of the Seylan Bank Panadura Branch, Teachers and Students from many study circles of UNASL around the country also participated. The function commenced with the recital of the National Anthem. Around 750 participants from all walk of life. Participated the special invitees and dignitaries present, appreciated the work of the Association throughout the year.

Welcome address was made by Executive Chairman of the Association Mr. M.M. Zawahir. The copies of the UNASL Annual 2018 were ceremoniously handed over to the Chief Guest, the Guest of Honour and the other

distinguished invitees. The keynote address regarding Global warming was delivered by Miss Hansani Vimansa Edirisinghe a student of Mathale Vijaya Vidyalaya who was the winner of Annual Speech Contest conducted by the UNASL. In addition to that Senior Lecture and former Executive member Mr. S.L.R.D. Ratugama, delivered the valuable speech regarding UNO.

Cultural items were presented by student from OKI international School and Police cultural team.

Miss. Hansani Vimansa Edirisinghe was awarded as the winner of Annual Speech Contest from Vijaya Vidyalaya Matale, Kumod Deumika Hapuarachchi was awarded as the winner of the Quiz competition from Mahanama College Colombo and Miss Janani Hansamali was awarded as the winner of the Essay writing competition. St. Joseph Girls College, Kegalle which was awarded as the Best Study circle. Award were also distributed to the best Teachers in Study Circle, the winners and runners up of the speech contest, the Quiz Competition and Essay Writing Contest.

Executive Member of the UNASL Mr. Sumathi Fernando was awarded Volunteer of the year award 2018 from Chief Guest Ms. Razia Pendse. The Secretary General Mr. Errol Smith delivered the vote of thanks.



## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

### **02. Annual General Meeting 2019.**

The 69<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the United Nations Association of Sri Lanka was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2019 at the National Secretariat in Panadura.

The event commenced with the hoisting the National Flag by Secretary General Mr. Errol Smith, and the UN Flag by the Executive Chairman Mr. M.M. Zawahir. Over 60 members were present at the Annual General Meeting.

The National Anthem was sung followed by two minutes silence being observed as a mark of respect of those members who had passed away. They were remembered in particular for their contribution to the Association.

Mr. Anver Dole was elected as Pro-tem chairman and the new office bearers were elected/re-elected to the National Executive Committee for 2019/2020. At the AGM, Major General Upul Perera was elected unanimously as President and Mr. Errol Smith was re-elected unanimously as Secretary General, by the members.

The members were given an opportunity to express their views on activities of United Nations Association of Sri Lanka. President enlightened the new members regarding the history and the activities of UNASL.



### **03 World Environmental Day – 2019**

The United Nations “World Environment Day 2019 “ was commemorated by the United Nations Association of Sri Lanka with the distribution of 1000 fruit plants among schools from Matara to Moratuwa on 04<sup>th</sup> June 2019, culminating with a ceremony held at the National Secretariat of the United Nations Association in Panadura on 05<sup>th</sup> June 2019. This event was presided over by the UNASL president, Maj Gen Upul Perera.

Dr. Upali Jayawardena spoke on Environmental Protection & Air Pollution, highlighting its importance and values. This was followed by a lecture by Dr. Amitha Bentota, Agricultural Consultant to the Ministry of Agriculture, Who spoke on the need to plant trees in order to protect the environment. In addition to the plants, several publications on Tree Planting, Environmental, Air Pollution, the 17 sustainable development Goals, etc., were presented to the schools. the UNASL is also



conducted an Essay Competition within the Schools in the UNA Study Circle, encompassing the environment, tree planting, air pollution as well as the SDG’s Simultaneously, there will also be a competition organized to monitor the progress of the plants distributed and winners will be recognized.

**04 Teachers Workshop on Diabetes**



UNA has successfully conducted Teachers workshop on Diabetes at Ramada Ranmal Holiday Resort in Moratuwa on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019. More than 75 teachers were participated for this programme from various schools in western province. An introduction to the UNASL and its study circle was made by Mr. M.M. Zawahir. Maj. Gen. Upul Perera delivered the welcome address and explained about the mastermind competition.

Three Doctors Spoke on Diabetes, Non Communicable Diseases and Healthy life style.

**05 Speech Competition – 2019**

The Inter Schools speech Competition was held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2019 at the UNASL Secretariat in Panadura with the participating of 19 Students from island wide schools. The



**Compiled by: Asoka Perera  
Asst. Secretary General**

winners of the Speech Competition will be declared by the Judge panel.

**06 Certificate Awarding Ceremony and 70th Anniversary of UNASL**

UNASL has launched a programme aimed at improving the knowledge of the general public, specially school leavers, through information technology. A computer Training Centre has been established and suitable IT courses have been designed for this purpose.

The first Awarding ceremony of this Programme was held on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2019 with the distinguished participation of the Chief of Political of the Embassy of the People Republic of China Mr. Luo Chong and he officially visited the Computer Training Center joining with President, Secretary General and other officers.

Then after UNASL 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary was held with participating of the Chief of Political of the Embassy of the People Republic of China Mr. Luo Chong.





UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION  
IN THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC  
OF SRI LANKA



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- Hon. Justice Shirani Tilakawardene  
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- H.E. the late Ranasinghe Premadasa  
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(Former Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, former Chairman Bank of Ceylon, former Chairman of the Greater Colombo Economic Commission and former Secretary to the last Governor-General)
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- The late Desamanya Ambassador  
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PhD (Colombo) Former High Commissioner to the Court of Saint James and former Ambassador to France and former Director General of Bandaranaike International Diplomatic Training Institute (BIDT)
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- Desabandu Dr. Siran Deraniyagala - MA (Cantab), PhD (Harv) Former Director - General of Archaeology
- Dr. Lakshman Marasinghe - LL.B (Lond), LL.M (Lond), PhD (Lond), LL.D (Colombo)  
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- W.M. Chithra Kumari
- M. Nimali Dhammika Abeysinghe
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- Miss. U. A. Buddinie Kaushalya

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(W/I)

# Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality

## A Review of the Implementation of SDGs

### By the High-Level Political Forum 2019

**By Ubesingha A Buddhinie**

AIA(SL),PgDip(Prog Mat)(UOM),CSA HDip(Arch)

*The United Nations Association of Sri Lanka (UNASL), works to strengthen and improve The United Nations (UN). Dissemination of information related to 2030 agenda published by the UN to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is an abiding task of UNASL since its disclose in year 2015. Accordingly, Annual 2015 disseminated details of 17 SDGs and related 169 targets. Subsequent Annuals published by UNASL in 2016, 2017 and 2018 provided no less emphasis to SDG reviews brought to light at High Level Political Forums (HLPF) of respective years.*

#### Introduction

**The High-level Political Forum (HLPF)** is the central platform of United Nations to follow-up and review the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where all States Members of the United Nations and States members of specialized agencies participates. Under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), HLPF 2019 convened from 9th to 18th July 2019 at United Nations Headquarters, New York.



The theme of HLPF 2019 was "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality". It encompassed 130 speakers in panels and more than 2000 registered participants where there were 33 meetings, 156 side events, 8 special events, 36 exhibitions and 17 VNR labs. Six SDGs were reviewed and 47 countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at HLPF 2019.

#### Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality

*“Rising inequalities have become a defining challenge of our time. Gross inequalities both within and among countries are putting sustainable development at risk, stirring social unrest, undermining social progress, threatening economic and political stability and undercutting human rights”.*

– Secretary General, UN

Inequality is a phenomenon of many dimensions. An integrated strategy is required that involves universal social protection measures, mechanisms for participation and the exercise of rights, which are critical to decrease inequalities and encourage empowerment. Manifesting the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda needs fresh thinking and renewed attempts to embrace whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches anchored in coordinated action. The right level of government intervention and coordination with development partners are adequately required to implement policies.

The theme of HLPF 2019 highlighted that it is necessary to inject new vigour into the efforts

## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

of civic engagement by institutionalizing relevant stakeholder involvement within all policy processes, building the capacity of civil society organizations and strengthening civic education. There must be room for individuals at the grassroots level and for young individuals, indigenous people, disabled individuals and others who are marginalized and vulnerable.

### **Review of SDG Implementation and Interrelations among Goals**

Review of SDG implementation and interrelations among goals were given emphasis at HLPF 2019. It was conferred that progress has been made over the past four years with respect to a number of SDGs and their targets, and a number of actions have been taken by governments and other stakeholders to respond more broadly to the 2030 Agenda. However it was highlighted that the global response to implementing the SDGs has not been ambitious enough, and a renewed commitment and accelerated action is needed to deliver the SDGs in time.

Slow progress of many SDGs was highlighted and disclosed that most vulnerable people and countries that continued to suffer the most. With the next decade in mind, it recognized a series of cross-cutting fields where there is a need for political leadership and urgent, scalable multi-stakeholder intervention to accelerate the progress dramatically.

SDGs reviewed at HPLF 2019 were as follows:

<b>SDGs</b>	<b>Goal Description</b>
Goal 4	Quality Education
Goal 8	Decent Work and Economic Growth
Goal 10	Reduce Inequalities
Goal 13	Climate Action
Goal 16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Goal 17	Partnership for the Goals

**Annual 2019**

## SDG 4 - Quality Education

The achievement of SDG 4 ensure “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, plays a central role in building sustainable, inclusive and resilient societies”. The first in-depth review of progress toward SDG 4 took place on the opening day of the 2019 HLPF session and it was highlighted that quality education is battling a “global learning crisis. No country can afford to have one in every three children out of school, as is currently the case in low and lower middle income countries. HLPF 2019 stressed that in order to achieve equitable systems, it is a necessity to recognize education as a public good, not as a commodity; address diversity to increase the quality of education; educate to advance gender equality and reduce gender violence, etc. Further, Persons with Disabilities called for system changes, such as universal design approaches that facilitate access to education.

## SDG 8 - Decent work and Economic Growth

SDG 8 promotes “sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. It reaffirms the mutually supportive relationship between economic and social policies, full employment and decent work. HLPF 2019 highlighted that the progress of SDG8 is slow and uneven.

There is a need for good governance and rule of law in creating environments for business, increasing women’s participation in the digital economy and life-long learning to ensure an agile and easily adaptable workforce for a dynamic labor market. The need for regional integration and inter-regional cooperation to spur economic growth, a focus on innovative technology-based manufacturing, education sector reforms to ensure the right skills are

## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

available, efforts to promote participation of young people in labor markets and ensure increased formal employment was also emphasized.

### SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities

Inequality reduction is a priority throughout the 2030 Agenda. SDG 10 is “reduce inequality within and among countries”. The review of SDG 10 called for reducing inequalities based on income, age, sex and other categories, as well as reducing inequalities between countries, which are driven by migration, development assistance and representation in international bodies, etc. It was reported that even most countries’ income is growing, inequality continues to rise, which indicates that growth does not reduce inequalities.

Drivers of inequality trends identified were: technology, globalization, fiscal austerity and informal employment. Forum further highlighted the importance of progressive fiscal policies, robust social protections to prevent people coming out of poverty from falling back into it, and a focus on lifelong education to prepare people for the future of work amid the fourth industrial revolution. Means of reducing inequality includes: wage standards and collective rights, childcare benefits, social protection floors, centralized wage bargaining, cash transfers to the most impoverished, social transfers and affordable access to social services, and earmarking funds for rural areas.

### SDG 13 – Climate action

Climate change is rapidly unfolding. The world is already experiencing changes in average temperature, shifts in the seasons and an increasing frequency of extreme weather events and other climate change impacts, affecting lives and livelihoods in all regions. HLPF 2019 revealed that the rhetoric on interlinkages between the SDGs and climate action is not

matched by action on the ground due to lack of quality data, analytical capability, and leadership empowered to take cross-sectoral decisions.



*Angry bird representing Climate Change*

Further, 90% of the natural disasters over the past 30 years were related to climate change and extreme weather events, and failing to include climate change in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plans could negate DRR efforts. Additionally, it emphasized that the “fourth industrial revolution” should focus on accelerating action on climate change and the SDGs; and highlighted the need to increase the grant element of climate finance.

### SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

SDG 16 aims to promote “peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. HLPF 2019 revealed that no

## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

substantial progress has been made on the SDG 16 targets in recent years; women comprise 70% of the victims of violence; 9 human-right defenders were killed weekly in 2018 compared to 7 in 2017; and only 40% of children under the age of 5 have birth certificates in Sub-Saharan Africa. It highlighted involving women, youth, and children in policy-making related to SDG 16; promoting non-discriminatory policies; instituting and enacting policies to protect human right defenders; and putting technology at the center of enhancing institutional capacity and children to be empowered to serve as agents of change, etc. It concluded that working with local parliaments and improving data collection as key interventions for implementing SDG 16.

### SDG 17 - Partnership for the Goals

It is the only Goal reviewed every year. The session to review progress against SDG 17 during the 2019 HLPF was titled, 'Financing the SDGs: Moving from Words to Action'. The forum revealed that Official Development Assistance (ODA) was down in 2018 by 2.7% in real terms from 2017, and humanitarian aid fell by 8%. It was suggested to reduce cost of remittances, focus on fragile and post-conflict states, mobilize women entrepreneurs and the poor should not be overtaxed to implement the SDGs through domestic resource mobilization.

## ***Education in Sri Lanka Are we on Track?***

***By Malshani Gamage***

*B.Sc. (Hons) Food Science & Nutrition*

*ATCL,LVCM,FVCM,(Speech & Drama)*

With the United Nations Organization focusing on several key Sustainable Development Goals in 2019, including SDG 4 – 'Quality Education', it seems imperative that a discussion on Education in the Sri Lankan context also takes place to establish its strengths and weaknesses.

Education is a basic right, and as mentioned in 'Review of SDG implementation and interrelations among goals – Discussion on SDG 4 Quality Education' (2019), is 'elementary to human dignity'. It also reinstates the fact that quality education leads to social mobility, reduced inequality and developing of skills to handle global and local challenges. Hence, this article will critically analyze whether these requirements are met through the Sri Lankan education system and what needs to be done if not.

Sri Lanka maintains one of the highest literacy rates in South Asia, especially a staggering 98.77 per cent among the youth, despite the ravages of nearly three decades of civil war which halted the island nation's development in many sectors and only ended in 2009. This high literacy rate can be mainly attributed to free education received through public schooling and undergraduate institutes. Sri Lanka is also one of the only two countries in South Asia to be recognized by the UN as achieving "high human development".



## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

Although Sri Lanka performs well on educational indicators such as elementary school enrollment and mean years of schooling, 'quality of education' varies depending on a number of factors, and can be especially poor in post-war regions. The civil war displaced thousands of citizens and destroyed parts of the country's educational infrastructure, resources and lead to a scarcity of teachers and teaching material. Additionally, the war and post-war rebuilding efforts diverted many funds away from education, resulting in wide-spread protests demanding increases in the comparatively low 2.55 per cent of GDP (average value from 1973 - 2017) allocated for educational spending.

Educational resources remain unevenly dispersed, with most of the best teachers, infrastructure and teaching aids concentrated in the urban areas. Reform efforts as well as policies are also inconsistently implemented. One such policy that affects the quality of education received by its citizens is the Language Policy of Sri Lanka, which promotes the acceptance of certain languages more, for instance Sinhala, over others like the Tamil language.

Another major issue within the Sri Lankan education system lies with its ROI – Returns-on-Investment – as the gradually increasing 'brain drain' phenomenon attracts the educated and the skilled away from the country to more developed countries, where these migrants believe better prospects and higher quality of life await. Outbound mobility is expected to rise even more, with more students seeking London curricular in schools with the intention of completing tertiary education abroad and the numbers admitted to local universities being generally low compared to those who sit for the prerequisite G.C.E. Advanced Level examination. The country plunging into instability during different governmental

regimes is another reason for skilled, educated thousands to migrate to countries such as Australia, Canada and Dubai. The others, mostly male children remaining in the country, take up easy means of earning such as becoming three wheeler drivers, so that they too don't experience potential opportunities for education. However, on the other hand, there is a positive trend as higher numbers of females seek tertiary education both locally and internationally.

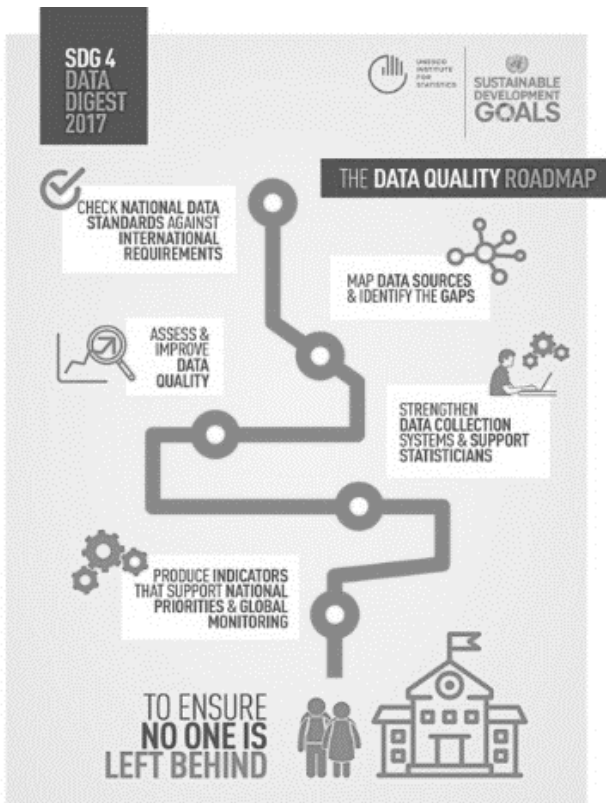
Quality concerns also arise with the fact that most competitive urban schools are overcrowded, resulting in unregulated tuition classes mushrooming everywhere with the promise of giving a competitive edge to the children's. This unregulated education however isn't just an issue with the schooling level; Sri Lanka recently saw escalating numbers of unregulated undergraduate and postgraduate institutes being established everywhere. Private observations include certain 'universities' being contained within one storey of a shifty building and another highly attended MBA program claiming affiliation to a non-existing UK university. Even the best public universities not being included into the lists of top-rated universities in the region is problematic as this suggests quality issues and an inability to cater to the current job market requirements.

Schools as well as universities in Sri Lanka face two other problems as well. One is the universal issue of children/undergraduates involved in substance abuse which stunts growth in almost all aspects of life. The other is the more region-oriented issue of 'ragging' which harms both children and adults mentally, emotionally and at times, physically – undermining any chances of gaining a proper education.

## Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019

Where Sri Lankan schools are concerned, a major deficiency in addressing special needs children is prevalent. Although in a positive trend more and more local universities are offering degrees in Special Needs Education, the number of schools open for special needs children have not increased proportionately and thus, such children are stigmatized and even kept away from schools. Similarly, differently-abled children as well as such adults find physical access to institutes offering quality education quite difficult.

Another concern is that most children and adults alike, in certain rural parts of the country, being incompetent in the handling of technology for even the basic of needs. Although admirably the incumbent Premier wishes to gift all Advanced Level students tablet computers, it needs some deliberation upon as those who receive it might be unable to use the device as intended, or worse, misuse it. Quality education and even technology-related learning, I believe, should begin at the root level, that is from Kindergarten up for a program like that of the Premier's to be successful.



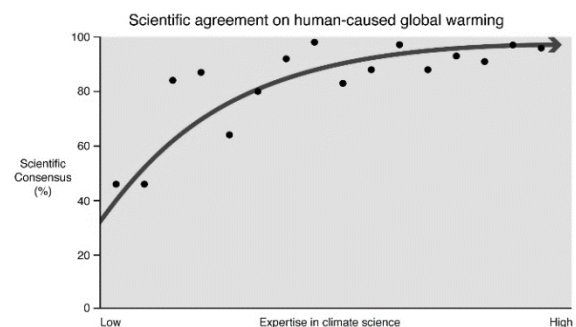
In this manner, Sri Lanka's standing with respect to quality education can be viewed as both satisfying and disappointing. It is my opinion that, while Sri Lanka has done comparatively well in terms of certain educational indicators, the 'quality' of this delivered entity remains questionable. Hence, as a country, the government as well as its citizens need to step up efforts to provide equal access to quality education for all. For instance, for quality education to be provided to the children of impoverished families, investment and offers are needed in educational scholarships (more like the recently introduced Oxford scholarships for top performing G.C.E. Advanced Level students), teacher training workshops, schools building and improvement of water and electricity access to schools. Therefore, it goes unsaid that as a country, we need more than just high literacy rates to attain the fourth of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 as aimed for by the United Nations Organization.

## Climate Change

### Where are We ?

### Can We be there in time ?? !!!

Climate change is one of the 17 goals that were reviewed in detail in the year 2019 at the HLPF of the ECOSOC. The overall theme for the year as decided in the previous year of "Inclusive Growth" also depends largely on the control of Global warming. Carbon emissions to the atmosphere has now been accepted as the primary reason for global warming after many studies by a host of Scientists.



## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

As a result of all these studies and continued discussions, the Paris Agreement was adopted in November 2015. At these discussions, nearly 170 countries decided to adopt the resolutions of the Paris Agreement to restrict carbon emissions to the atmosphere to about 1.5 percent above the levels that prevailed in the past. Even though the majority of the world community agreed with this formula, the agreement got into jeopardy as the USA which agreed with rest of the world in 2015, decided in 2017 to opt out from the agreement quoting unacceptable reasons.

This has resulted in the implementation of the Agreement getting into jeopardy. However, many countries especially European countries have behaved in a different manner. The importance of reducing carbon emissions and agreeing to keep these emissions at levels below what it was in the past has been accepted as crucial to containing the increase in the global warming .

There are many countries that have declared “carbon emergencies”. The UK is one of them. Scotland which is part of the UK declared a carbon emergency earlier and following up on this action the former PM Theresa May declared a carbon emergency. Thereafter, quite a few countries have followed this example.

In the reviews of the SDGs which are conducted annually, many countries have agreed to act on the decisions of the Paris Agreement. However due to the confusion that resulted from the USA’s withdrawal, discussions have ended indecisively and a final decision on the implementation had to be postponed to the summit to be held in 2020.

The problem of carbon emissions are severe in developed countries such as USA, Germany and also in the countries where most of the activities are based on fossil fuel. This problem is also severe in the countries that are developing at a faster rate such as China and India. But some

countries, especially many small countries do not emit lot of carbon to the atmosphere. Therefore, a firm commitment from countries such as USA, China, European Union and India is necessary for the success of the agreement. For example Sri Lanka's emissions to the atmosphere increases at about 0.33% per year, which is well below the Paris agreement norms.

But it should not result in Sri Lanka trying to emit carbon up to the maximum permissible level. We must set an example to the rest of the world just as in the case of Bhutan, which is one of the few countries that are carbon negative, meaning that the level of the carbon emission to the atmosphere has not increased over the years.

There are many other countries who aspire to be carbon neutral over a given period. Some aspire to be carbon neutral in 2030 or even 2050. Many countries are moving away from Fossil fuel to Renewable Energy. For example, Australia, India and many other European countries too have decided to commence its shift towards renewable energy and to reduce the carbon emissions as much as possible.

As a start, many of these countries have decided not to use Fossil fuel based energy for day to day activities such as street lighting. There are many cities who even now use renewable energy for street lighting.

There are many types of renewable energy. Hydro energy has been in use for a long time. But it is very capital intensive in its development. But there are other forms of energy such as Solar, Wind power, Geo-thermal energy which can be tapped even at small scale. Countries such as Australia, New Zealand and many European countries are investing on these types of renewable energy. Geo- Thermal energy is also being developed at a very fast rate in New Zealand.

## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

However there are negative signs too, especially in the USA and there appears to be many new investments based on Fossil fuel. Even in countries such as Sri Lanka, there is a reluctance to move into renewable energy. Some of these decisions are based purely on short term cost considerations. Even at the moment there are proposals to invest in coal based power projects.

In Sri Lanka, the use of wind power and solar power needs to be encouraged. With 12 hours sunlight throughout the year, Sri Lanka is in a advantageous position to tap Solar energy. With the two trade winds which are called Monsoons, also provide ample opportunities to tap Wind power too. However it appears that the



enthusiasm is lagging in tapping these sources of energy, which is available free of charge.

It is expected that all the issues relating to Global warming and Climate change will be discussed at the climate summit under the auspices of the UN which is scheduled for December 2019 and also at the summit to be held in 2020.

A Climate Action Summit was held on 23rd September 2019. The final outcome seem to be that the world community as a whole is far behind schedule and the likelihood of achieving the SDG targets on climate change are too far-fetched.



***By Sumathi Fernando***

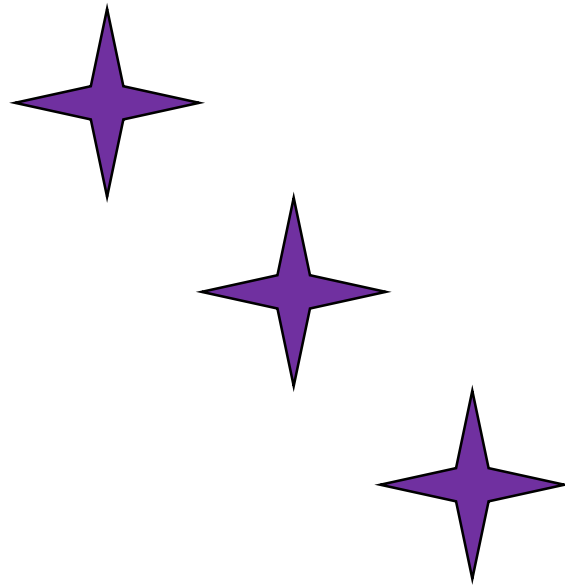
*With Best Complements*

*From*

**Foodland Hotel & Bakery**  
Maradana

*With Best Complements*

*From*



**Sambodi Home**

*No: 277 Magalla Galle.*

*With Best Complements*

*From*

**Changos Park View Restaurant**

*With Best Complements*

*From*

**A. A. Auto Mart**

*Dutugemunu Street*

*Dehiwala.*

*Tel: 077 225 6462*



*With Best Complements*

*From*

**Rahuman Hassim**

*Mawanella*



## Greta Thunberg

### 'You Have Stolen My Dreams and My Childhood'

In an emotional speech at the United Nations during the Climate Action Summit on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September, the 16-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg appealed to world leaders about the grave need to stop the effects of climate change.

“You all come to us young people for hope. How dare you?” she said. “You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words, and yet, I’m one of the lucky ones.

People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing.”

Thunberg grew tearful, as she continued to condemn what she sees as the lack of action on part of leaders around the world to halt climate change. “We are in the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you?”



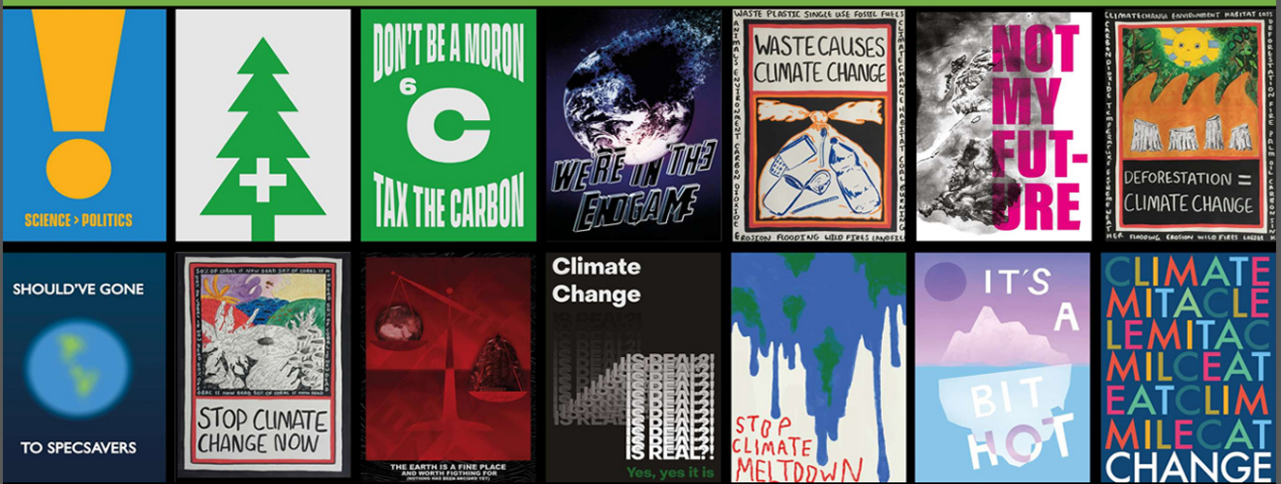


# distil the air

<p>BACK TO SCHOOL WHEN</p>  <p>IS COOL</p>	<p>THERE IS NO PLANET B THERE IS NO PLANET B THERE IS NO PLANET B THERE IS NO PLANET B THERE IS NO PLANET B THERE IS NO PLANET B THERE IS NO PLANET B THERE IS NO PLANET B THERE IS NO PLANET B THERE IS NO PLANET B</p>	<p>URANUS IS CLEAN SO WHY ISN'T EARTH?</p> 	<p>THERE'S NO PLANET B</p>  <p>THERE'S NO PLANET B</p>	<p>I'M MELTING! MELTING!</p>  <p>OHHHHH WHAT A WORLD, WHAT A WORLD.</p>	<p>SOS</p> 	<p>IF YOU CAN'T RESPECT EXISTENCE EXPECT RESISTANCE</p> 
<p>HOT TOO FOR SCHOOL</p> 	<p>VR user in a fiery landscape</p> <p>"wait a minute you're telling me you need to climb those things?"</p>	<p>BIG FOR LIFE... TRAPPED FOR LIFE</p> 	<p>RISE UP BEFORE THE SEA DOES</p> 	<p>IN CASE OF EMERGENCY</p> <p>BREAK</p> <p>→ ←</p> <p>BAD HABITS</p>	<p>OPEN YOUR EYES TO THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION</p> 	



# rescue the green



12 BRIEF LESSONS

# ON EUROPE'S ENERGY TRANSITION

**1** Energy has historically been a key driver of European **COOPERATION**. But current EU proposals are not enough. To comply with the Paris Climate Agreement, we **MUST GIVE UP** fossil fuels altogether by 2050.

**2** A 100% renewable energy system in Europe is now technically possible using existing **STORAGE** and **DEMAND RESPONSE** technologies.



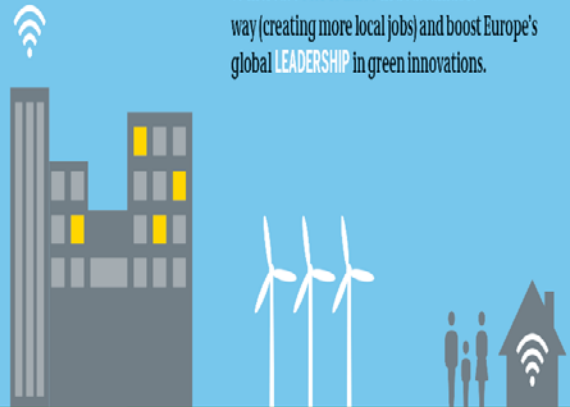
**3** Stronger **INTERCONNECTIONS** of markets and infrastructure across Europe will make the energy transition cheaper for all Europeans.



**7** Digitalization can make this transformation more **DEMOCRATIC AND EFFICIENT**, and can reduce the bill for the end consumer.



**8** The European energy transition promises to increase **PROSPERITY** in a sustainable way (creating more local jobs) and boost Europe's global **LEADERSHIP** in green innovations.



**9** Since 2013, renewables have helped **SLASH** Europe's import bill for fossil fuels by more than a third, **CUTTING ITS DEPENDENCY** on unstable and unpleasant regimes.

**4** The biggest potential lies in **INCREASING EFFICIENCY**. Europe-wide we could reduce our energy demand by half by 2050.

**10** A **SOCIALLY JUST TRANSITION** is both essential and viable: all over Europe, the renewables sector already provides more well-paid, secure local jobs than the coal industry.



**5** A switch to 100% renewables in Europe will trigger **SYSTEM CHANGE** – away from centralized, monopolistic utilities to decentralized, community power projects and innovative business models.



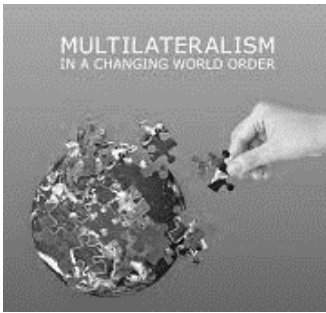
**11** **ENERGY POVERTY** is being tackled by pioneering community power projects, acting in solidarity with those in their own community addressing this challenge.



**6** Framed by smart strategies and legislation, this system change can be driven by **CITIZENS, CITIES AND ENERGY COOPERATIVES**, leaving much more wealth in communities.

**12** Europe's Neighbourhood Policy should **INSPIRE AND SUPPORT** other countries to decarbonize their economies. A socially just energy transition in Europe's neighbouring regions can stimulate their progress and stability.





# Challenges Facing Multilateral Trade

*By Professor Sirimevan Colombage*

*Emeritus Professor of Economics, Open University of Sri Lanka*

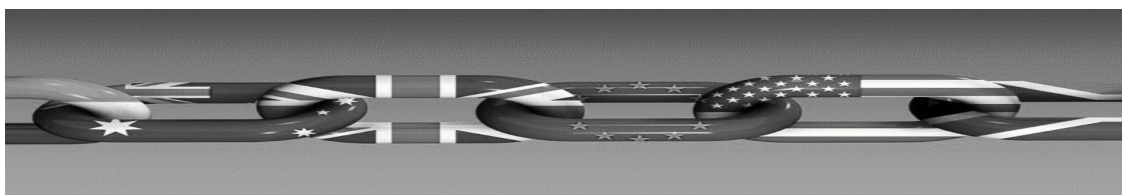
Millions of poor people across the globe, particularly, those in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, have been able to cross the poverty line by reaping the benefits of free trade. It has been increasingly evident worldwide that free trade brings about multifaceted benefits to countries by way of (a) improved resource allocation, (b) access to better technologies, inputs and intermediate goods, (c) advantage of economies of scale, (d) greater domestic competition, (e) knowledge and technology transfer, and (f) better economic growth prospects.

## **WTO's initiatives to promote multilateral trade**

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) entered into force in 1948 as an interim arrangement to sort out trade complications in the aftermath of the second world war. It was replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO), which was established in 1995, to facilitate production of and trade in goods and services so as to raise living standards and employment, particularly in developing countries. The three cornerstones of WTO are (a) trade in goods and services (GATT), (b) trade in services (GATS), and (c) protection of intellectual property rights (TRIPS). The WTO facilitates multilateral trade by providing a forum for trade negotiations and administering trade relationships among member countries.

The WTO treats every country as a most favoured nation (MFN). It does not allow member countries to impose trade restrictions other than customs duties which are to be lowered gradually. It means that a lower customs duty offered by one member of WTO must be extended to all other members. In spite of this MFN clause, WTO itself permits a country to enter into a free trade agreement or custom union granting more preferential treatment to the participating country than to other member countries. This contradictory provision has given rise to proliferation of many bilateral and regional agreements over the years paving the way to discriminatory treatment.

At the last round of trade negotiations held in Doha in 2001, the member countries of WTO agreed to promote multilateral trade by lowering trade barriers and trade rules. Its goal was to be realized by 2005. But trade talks collapsed due to the fact that the United States and European Union were not willing to give up their agricultural subsidies.



## **Multilateralism vs bilateralism and regionalism**

Bilateral and regional trade agreements in different forms surged throughout the world in the 1990s. The pace of such agreements accelerated following the stalemate of the Doha round of trade negotiations of WTO, and reached a momentum following the suspension of the Doha-Development Agenda in 2006. Some of the major regional trade agreements (RTAs) are the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), the European Union (EU) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). A total of 302 RTAs are in force by 2019. In addition, there are hundreds of bilateral trade agreements between countries.

Most of these agreements cover WTO+ provisions including trade in goods, trade remedies, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, customs procedures and trade facilitation, trade in services, telecom, E-commerce and government procurement. Some of the agreements also cover WTO-X provisions such as investment, competition, intellectual property, transparency and economic and technical cooperation.

This new wave of trade relationships, identified as Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), led to a revival of the debate on the relationship between regionalism and multilateralism in the 1990s. In this context, the question whether these trading arrangements will serve as “building blocks” or “stumbling blocks” in multilateral trade has become increasingly important.

A major benefit of FTAs is that a member country can enjoy trade creation by taking advantage of tariff reduction by the partnering country for its exports. However, a main argument put forward against FTAs is that although they may lead to trade creation, they may also have trade diversion from a low-cost non-FTA country to a high-cost FTA member country, thus losing efficiency gains.



A country having several FTAs, signed with different countries, is likely to be saddled with complexities arising from multiple regulations pertaining to rules of origin and other multiple preferential treatments – the condition which Professor Jagdish Bhagwati described as the “spaghetti bowl effects”. Therefore, he recommends that priority should be accorded to implementation of unilateral liberalization within a sound

### **Need to revitalize multilateral trade**

The UN Secretary General António Guterres reiterates the need to revitalize multilateral trade. He stated at a recent special UN session that members need to work to restore the spirit of international cooperation and “buttress this unique institution that has safeguarded international trading relationships over the past 70 years”. While recognizing trade’s contribution to economic growth and sustainable development, he emphasized that global trade tensions in recent years threaten growth of international trade and the very foundations of rule-based multilateral trading system. He warns. "It is worth

## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

highlighting that when trade tensions rise, there are no winners, only losers, especially among developing countries."

### **Sri Lanka's trading system**

Sri Lanka was the first country in South Asia to liberalize foreign trade way back in 1977. Accordingly, the stringent import controls prevailed earlier were removed and customs duties were brought down, and foreign exchange balance was to be achieved through a flexible exchange rate system so as to promote export-led growth. But since then, free foreign trade has been disrupted from time to time with various trade barriers including high import duties, para tariffs and non-tariff barriers. Para tariffs consist of Commodity Export Subsidy Scheme (CESS) and port and Airport Levy (PAL).

Currently, Sri Lanka has a highly complex tariff schedule with ad-valorem rates, specific rates and mixed rates. It contains nearly 7,500 import tariff lines, which are intended to discriminate among otherwise similar goods. It is encouraging to note that these are to be phased within five years in line with the government's liberalization programme.

In line with the global trend, Sri Lanka has entered into several bilateral and multilateral trade agreements to foster foreign trade and investment. They include Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries (GSTP), India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA), Pakistan-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (PSFTA), South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), South Asian Preferential Trade Area (SAPTA), and Sri Lanka-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (SLSFTA).

### **Way forward**

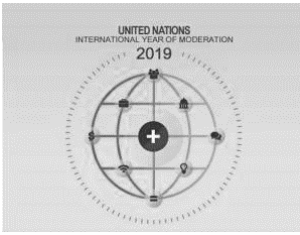
While multilateral trade is at stalemate, FTAs and RTAs have emerged as the norm in the global trading system defeating the very objectives of WTO when it was set up two and a half decades ago. Greater international cooperation is needed to reverse this trend and to foster free trade across the world.

First and foremost, priority must be given to arrest growing opposition to further multilateral liberalization among industrial countries. It is also necessary to reorient various agreements and rules of WTO for the benefit of its weakest members to enable them to harness the benefits of multilateral trade. The WTO must find ways and means to ensure that numerous FTAs are used to advance the long-standing principles of non-discrimination and transparency in international commerce.

Each country needs to have a trade policy detailing a time-bound agenda steering trade liberalization. In this regard, the UN in its post-2015 Agenda has recognized that trade policy cannot be treated as a stand-alone component of the development agenda. Depending on the circumstances in each country, it is essential to formulate fiscal, monetary and exchange-rate policies, along with science and technology policies, to ensure that trade is geared to promote inclusive and sustainable development.

Globally, it is desirable that countries pursue unilateral trade liberalization on their own rather than resorting to regional or bilateral trade agreements which hinder multilateral trade.





# Moderation

## *The need of the hour*

## *Lord Buddha said so too!!*

**By Mrs. Usula Wijesuriya**

The United Nations is a Kaleidoscope of Races, Religions, Cultures, Colours and Views held together by the bond of unity among diversity. With such a background “Moderation” should be the keyword in all their dealings; but so far it has not been given the prominence it deserves.

The UN General Assembly has declared that 2019 should be the International Year of Moderation. However it is not the only topic for 2019. The year for Indigenous Languages and the Periodic Tables are also on the cards as Topics of discussion. Unfortunately, moderation is getting the least attention when it is certainly the need of the Century.

As former Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tuan Razak terms it, it is an effort to “Combat the spread of extremism and radicalism by adopting Moderation.”

The UNGA resolution puts it formally as an effort to amplify the voices of moderation through the promotion of dialogue, tolerance, understanding and cooperation (IYM 2019). But it has only received a slow start. It may be because of the closure of the Global Movement of Moderates Foundation in 2018. Apart from all this UNGA has stipulated that the cost of all activities related to moderation should be met from Voluntary Contributions. Why? Has it not created sufficient donor interest or is it because moderation is just a word rapidly moving towards extremism which will undoubtedly bring our own doom faster than we expect?

What is moderation? Its manifestations are many. It manifests itself in Empathy, Compassion, Dialogue, Conflict, Resolution and Team work. Each aspect of moderation is equally important. It is only if all these work together that we can have true moderation as a global concept. It will then

manifest itself as the Middle Path. Something which would hopefully suit all the members.

The Middle Path or Moderation is what most countries belonging to the United Nations ignore – or cannot accept. Conflict Resolution means different things to different nations. Even though a draft resolution titled Moderation (Document A72/L21 was adopted by a record vote of 135 in favour and two against – (Israel and USA), many speakers at the subsequent debate voiced their doubts that the Language used in the resolution might be used to suppress or curtail the freedom of thought or expression. This is a lame excuse to shelve an issue on which the whole of humanity depends.

For instance, if we the problem of Global Warming unless some form of control with enough clout to slow down the rate of damage is implemented, we will be hurting ourselves towards global destruction which cannot be avoided.

Glaciers have melted, carbon emissions have reached alarming proportions, forests are afire and sea levels are rising. Total control over these issues cannot be expected, but moderation or taking the middle path is a way out for all living beings.

Most of the other problems the entire world face today is due to the lack of Moderation. We set a standard of behaviour for ourselves and expect another standard from the rest of the world. If only we could reach a consensus of equal rights based on moderation, the world would be a far more peaceful place. A valuable step in the right direction has been taken by the Secretary General by proposing two reports titled “Promotion of a culture of Peace and inter Religious and inter Cultural Dialogue” understanding and cooperation for peace (Document A/72/488)

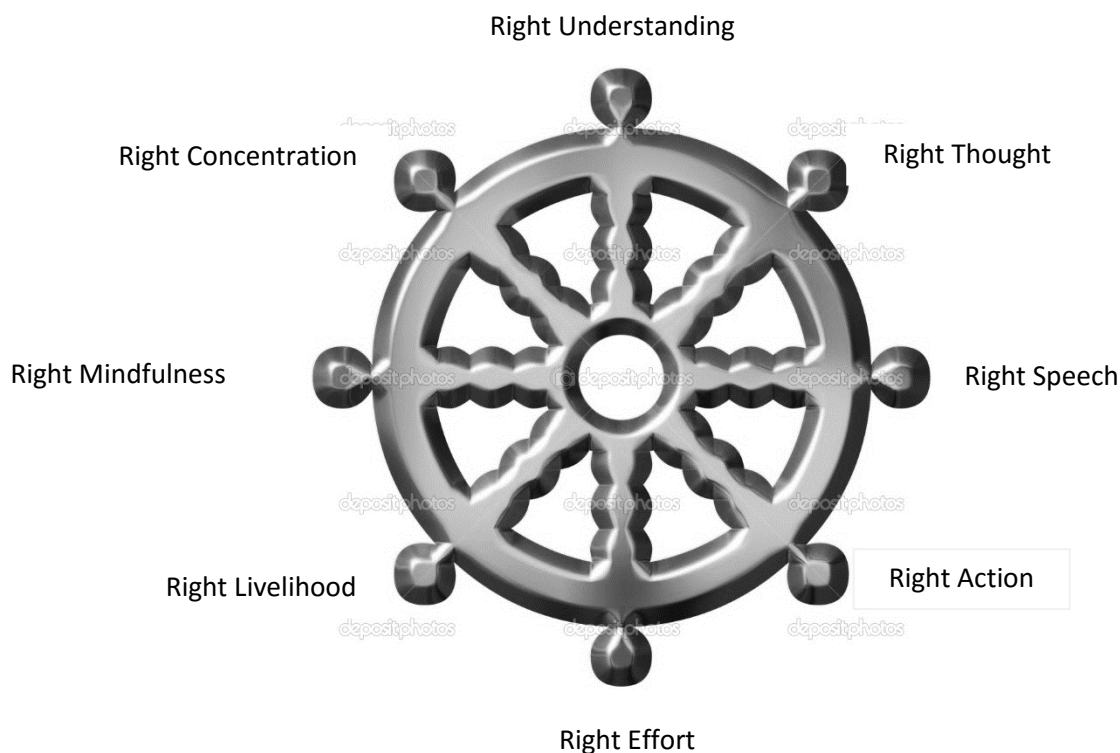
## Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019

All great religions of the world endorse Moderation as the pivot on which society could move without friction.

The Buddha, in his very first discourse said he based all his teachings on the “Middle Path”. Explaining what he meant by the Middle Path, He begins this Discourse saying – “There are two extremes which should be avoided -Indulgence and Mortification”.

If we analyse the state of the world today, we can see how one set of human beings Indulge themselves in luxuries while another set starves. As Mahathma Gandhi once said, there are enough resources in the world for all living beings but not enough for human greed.

Explaining what he meant by the Middle Path, the Buddha says - The Middle Path is,



He goes further to explain what is meant by “Right”. Right cannot have double standards. All living beings have the same needs, desires, emotions etc. What is Right should be Right for everybody. Hunger is the same, whether it happens in the so called Developed world or the Developing world. Sickness and Pain does not pick or choose its victims. The fear of death is Universal, so is having and lust.

If all humanity share the same feelings, the same needs, the same fears, Right Understanding, Right Effort and Right Action should be the standards adopted by all Global Leaders. These are what we loosely term “Human Rights”.

Are we honouring them?

### Post Script

*74th Sessions of the general Assembly was concluded recently. However, in spite of the crucial importance of moderation in the behavior of the International community no meaningful discussion to place on this subject at the sessions.*

*Sumathi Fernando*

# 2019 International Year of Periodic Table of Chemical Elements

**By Eng. Nadeeshan Amarathunga**

**B.Eng.(hons), Monash University Malaysia AMIESL,**

**Life Member, UNASL**

The United Nations General Assembly during its 74th Plenary Meeting proclaimed 2019 as the “International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements” (IYPT 2019) on 20 December 2017. Based on the 202 EX/Decision 43, the IYPT2019 was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its 39th Session (39 C/decision 60).

1869 is considered as the year of discovery of the Periodic System by the Russian scientist, Dmitri Mendeleev. The IYPT 2019 also commemorates the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements. The International Year aims to recognize the importance of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements as one of the most important and influential achievements in modern science reflecting the essence not only of chemistry, but also of physics, biology and other basic sciences & Engineering disciplines.

The initiative for IYPT2019 is supported by IUPAC in partnership with the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP), European Association for Chemical and Molecular Science (EuChemS), the International Council for Science (ICSU), International Astronomical Union (IAU), and the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science and Technology (IUHPS). It was submitted by numerous organizations from over 50 countries around the world.

The IYPT 2019 is an opportunity to reflect upon many aspects of the periodic table, including its history, the role of women in research, global trends and perspectives on science for sustainable development, and the social and economic impacts of this field.

## The Periodic Table

Russian scientist Dmitry Ivanovich Mendeleev (Figure 1) prepared the first periodic system in 1869, when only 63 elements had been discovered, based on chemical and physical properties of elements.



**Dmitry Ivanovich Mendeleev**  
**(1834 – 1907)**

The rows and columns not only categorized the properties of each element, but also predicted the existence of yet to be discovered elements.

Today, there are 118 elements on the periodic table, Four with atomic numbers – 113 (Nihonium), 115 (Moscovi), 117 (Tennessin) and 118 (Oganesson) – were added in 2016. With the discoveries of new elements, it's difficult to ascertain how long the table is going to be in the future.

**Ununennium**, also known as **eka-francium** or **element 119**, is the hypothetical chemical element with symbol **Uue** and atomic number 119. *Ununennium* and *Uue* are the temporary systematic IUPAC name and symbol respectively, until its discovery is confirmed and a permanent name is decided upon. In the periodic table of the elements, it is expected to be an s-block element, an alkali metal, and the first element in the eighth period. It is the lightest element that has not yet been synthesized

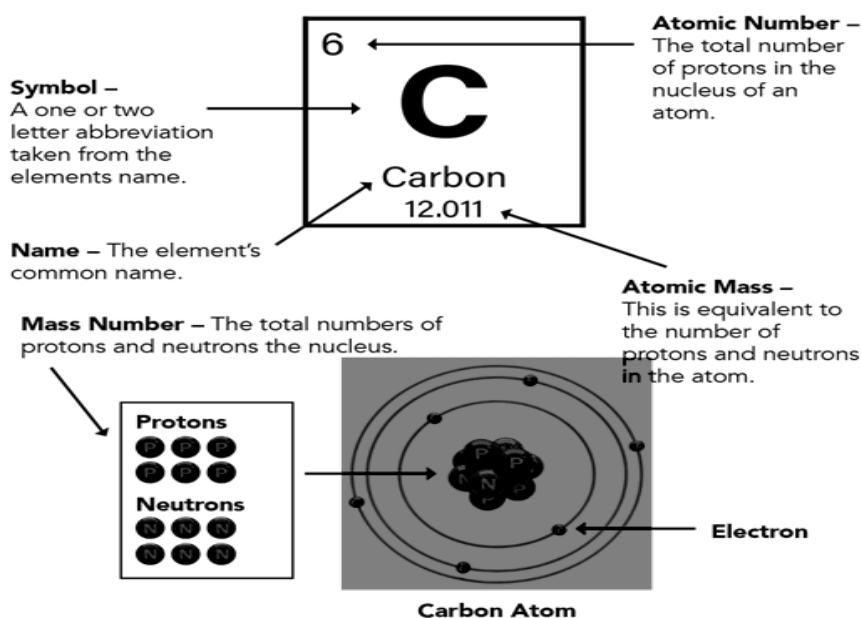


Figure 01: Details of an element in periodic table

As far as an element of the periodic table is concerned, it consists with name, symbol, atomic number (the total number of protons in the nucleus) and atomic mass (mass of the nucleus) which is demonstrated in figure 01.

In this article, I am not explaining the technical aspect of periodic table and its elements, because it is more worth to understand it in a sustainable development point of view and this table reminds us that there are less than 100 stable elements on our planet (as well as a couple of dozens of radioactive ones) from which to derive all the materials that are required for life and for well-being and comfortable living. We need to ensure that the finite stocks of these are not excessively depleted or used in environmentally damaging ways.

The designation by the UN of 2019 as the International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements provides a timely opportunity to reflect on this warning and consider how best to meet the challenge it presents.

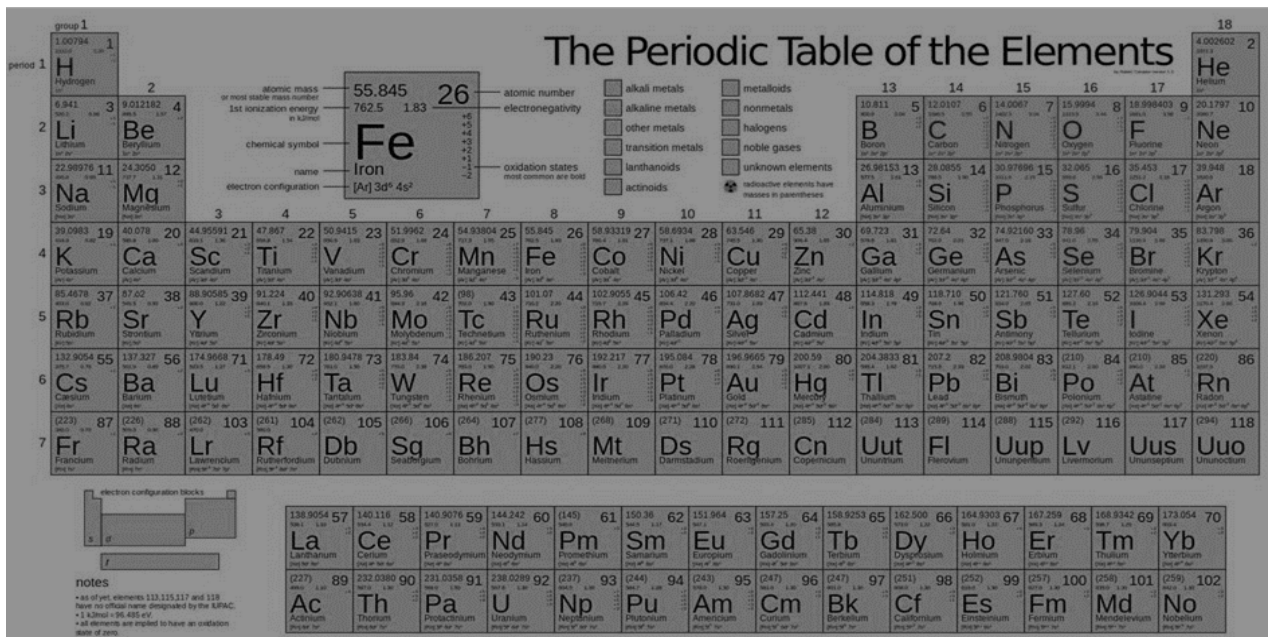


Figure 02: Modern Periodic Table of Elements

### Periodic Table and Sustainable Development

At least 60 elements can be detected in trace amounts or more in the human body, and about 28 of these – a quarter of the Periodic Table – are thought to play an active positive role in the life and health of humans. While carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus and calcium make up almost 99 % of the human body, molecules and complexes containing small amounts of the remaining elements utilized are involved in a wide range of metabolic functions, including as enzymes, catalysts and transporters (e.g. iron in hemoglobin, which carries oxygen and carbon dioxide). In addition to using the same major building blocks, other organisms may utilize some different elements in their biochemical processes (e.g. magnesium in chlorophyll, which fixes oxygen in plants).

Developing technology for the exploitation of mineral ores has been a constant feature of human history and increasing use of different elements has been a major driver of economic growth since the Industrial Revolution. Advances utilizing diverse elements have provided benefits such as stronger magnets that are used in many industries (e.g. using the rare earth metals neodymium and dysprosium), smaller microprocessors (e.g. gallium and germanium), more efficient solar cells (e.g. gallium, indium and tellurium) and touchscreens (indium, niobium). Many modern devices use a very wide range of elements and compounds derived from them. General Electric, one of the world's largest companies, uses 72 of the first 82 elements of the Periodic Table in its product lines, and many of these elements are rare or difficult to obtain. In another example, relating to a single type of product, at least 70 elements, in simple or compound forms, can be found in the average smartphone. (\*Source: Wiley Online Library)

Generation of greenhouse gases from combustion of carbon-rich materials to produce energy is contributing to climate change. The atmospheric concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> is already well into the threshold region where there is an increasing risk of global warming. Having increased by about 40 % globally since the Industrial Revolution, the atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> level flattened out in 2014–2016 before rising again in 2017–2018 due to increased use of oil and gas.

## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

As examples the use of atmospheric nitrogen and use of phosphorus in industry can be considered as shown below (\* Source: Research based on “Elements and Sustainability by Matlin et al in 2018” published by European Journal of Inorganic Chemistry)

The Haber–Bosch process for the fixation of atmospheric nitrogen as ammonia and the production of ammonium nitrate and other N-containing fertilizers was extremely important in helping to raise agricultural yields and feed the burgeoning world population in the 20th century. However, pollution of the Earth's atmosphere and water by nitrogen oxides and nitrates is estimated to have exceeded the planetary boundary for reactive nitrogen species by about two and a half times.

In parallel with the increased use of nitrogen, there has been a complementary increase in the use of phosphorus, particularly in phosphate fertilizers, with a concomitant rise in pollution of water due to agricultural run-off. At the present scale of use, it is predicted there will be a shortage of phosphates in the next 50 to 150 years.

The changes must also involve finding ways to reduce the use of more abundant elements to a minimum, while much more consideration must be given to the entire cycle of use, repair, upgrading, repurposing, by-products, waste and disposal, in order to prevent damage to the planetary environment. Manufacturers might consider emulating Apple's 2017 pledge to make its smartphones entirely from recycled material. Inspiration may be taken from the decision by the Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to manufacture the approximately 5,000 gold, silver and bronze medals for use at Tokyo 2020 only from consumer electronics such as used mobile phones, after recycled metals were used to produce medals for the 2012 London Games and the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. (\*Courtesy : Periodic Table and Sustainability by Matlin et al in 2018)

The United Nations, recognizing chemistry's massive contribution towards promoting sustainable development and providing solutions to global challenges including energy, education, agriculture, and health, has designated 2019 as the International Year of the Periodic Table of Elements. In as much the important fact that we all must understand is, periodic table conveys a stark warning about the limits of the element stock of our planet and the dangers of excessive and inappropriate utilization that are a threat to sustainable development.

# **Security Council of the United Nations**

## ***- Some Personal Thoughts***

***Professor D Y D Samarawickrama***  
***Queen Mary University of London, United Kingdom***

### **Introduction**

The Security Council UNSC is one of six main Organs of the United Nations Organisation, commonly referred to as the UN. Its main task is to maintain international peace and security. Like the UN itself, UNSC was created after the Second world War with noble intentions of addressing the shortcomings of the previous international organisation, the League of Nations. Although there has not been a Third World war, there are many small wars or armed conflicts occurring in some part of the world at any one time. The UN has intervened successfully end some of the conflicts but has failed to do so with others. Therefore, this is an opportune moment to take stock of the UN / UNSC.

### **Composition**

UN is a representative body consisting of almost all the nations on earth, 193 sovereign states to be exact. They have equal representation. The Vatican and the Palestine are not members. In addition, Taiwan, Western Sahara, Kosovo, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Northern Cyprus are also not members. However, the latter countries have been recognised by at least one UN member.

The same cannot be said of the UNSC. It is true that in addition to the five permanent members, China, France, Russian Federation, UK and the USA, other members from various regions of the globe become representative members in rotation. However, the non-permanent members do not have the same rights as the permanent members the “Big Five”. It should also be noted that China’s seat was held originally by Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Government, the Republic of China. However, after the Chinese war, Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan and the Communist Party took control of the mainland China which then became the People’s Republic of China PRC. In 1971, the China’s seat was given to the PRC despite objections from the US but with the support of many Third world countries. Russians also had a change of representation after the after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Russian Federation was recognized as the legal successor state of the USSR.

### **The Power of the Veto**

The “Big Five” can block any resolution to be adopted by the UNSC. In other words, for a resolution to be passed, it must have the unanimous approval of the “Big Five” How did the veto come about?

When the UNSC was being established, Russia was concerned that the Western powers (and China) would gang up against it. Therefore, it insisted on having the power of veto to protect its minority position.

## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

At the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in Washington DC held in 1944, veto rights of the permanent members became contentious issue. The Russians wanted an absolute veto, preventing even the discussion of any issue they did not like whereas the British argued that a nation should not be able to veto resolutions on disputes to which it was a party. At the conference in Yalta in 1945, the Americans, British, and the Russians agreed that each of the "Big Five" could veto any action by the UNSC but not procedural resolutions, meaning that the permanent members could not prevent a debate on a resolution. At the conference held in San Francisco in the same year, the Australians argued that the veto powers of the permanent members should be restricted. However, their efforts were defeated by a majority vote which was most unfortunate. After all, the veto powers of the "Big Five" have been a source of resentment among the many small nations. One must not also forget that the veto powers of the "Big Five" were forced on the smaller nations with the threat that without the veto, there would be no UN!

When one analyses the records, the use of veto by the big five is given below. Please note that these figures are approximate.

China ~ 15  
UK ~ 30  
France ~ 18  
US ~ 80  
Russia ~ 110

No wonder that the Russians wanted the veto so much! A majority of the vetoes have been used not in critical international security situations, but for purposes such as blocking the admission of a member state or a candidate for the position of the UN Secretary-General. It is worth recording that the Russians vetoed the admission of then Ceylon to the UN after it gained independence! (This writer was in primary school when then Ceylon eventually joined the UN in 1955. He remembers well the sense of achievement felt by the ruling class. Regrettably, it meant little to the others). The US appears to have used the veto often to protect Israeli interests.

## **The Balance Sheet**

In the nineteen fifties and the sixties, the UN was ineffective due to the Cold War. However, it did manage to intervene in the Korean War and the Suez Crisis. In contrast, it failed to intervene when the Russians invaded Hungary and effected a regime change. Further tragedies have followed. One recent example is the UN mission's failure to prevent ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. In fairness, the UN Charter had been written primarily to prevent aggression by one nation against another so that an internal conflict within a country such as Yugoslavia posed serious challenges to the interpretation of the Charter. Similarly, in 1994, the UN Mission failed to intervene to prevent the genocide in Rwanda due largely to the indecision in the UNSC. All these instances have been well reported, analysed and discussed.

The successes include its intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo, ending the civil war in El Salvador, peacekeeping in Namibia and the actions that followed the invasion of Kuwait by the Iraqis. However, the legacy of the Iraqi war has divided world opinion: was it a success or an abject failure?



## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

Similarly, the UNSC-sanctioned invasion of Afghanistan has not defeated the Taliban, nor has it brought peace to that country.

Those who question the UNSC's effectiveness and relevance cite the lack of any consequences for violating a Council resolution. During the Darfur crisis, Janjaweed militias, supported by some elements of the government, committed violence against an indigenous population, killing thousands of civilians. In the Srebrenica massacre, Serbian troops committed genocide against Bosnians, although Srebrenica had been declared a UN safe area, protected by about 400 armed Dutch peace keeping forces. In the latter incident, the Dutch forces were condemned roundly by the world at large for standing by while the killings continued. Such condemnation with "FAILURE" writ large against the UN in general and the UNSC in particular has brought little comfort to those who suffered terribly.

## **Reforming the UNSC**

UNSC is a key part of the UN. Although there have been many failures, it has managed to prevent a Third World War. Obviously, it cannot take sole credit for this because the "Big Five" who are also nuclear powers have been cautious in their approach to dealing with their adversaries.

One of the burning issues is reform of the membership of the UNSC. Discussions have been going on for some considerable time regarding this issue, for example, the UN General Assembly debated this issue in 1993. However, a consensus is yet to be reached.

The countries making the strongest demands for permanent seats are Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan. Japan and Germany are now the UN's second and third-largest contributors financially. Brazil and India are two of the largest contributors of troops to UN peace-keeping missions. These two countries also have large populations.

There are others who oppose the expansion of permanent seats. These countries include Italy, Canada, South Korea, Spain, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Turkey, Argentina and Colombia. Canada's position is surprising given its liberal attitudes.

One counter proposal is to increase the number of permanent members by five, by admitting Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan, one seat from Africa (most likely Egypt, Nigeria or South Africa), and one seat from the Arab League.

The "Big Five" have announced their positions on the proposed reform reluctantly. The US has supported unequivocally the admission of Japan and India and a small number of additional non-permanent members to the "Club". On the other hand, the UK and France have supported the claims by Brazil, Germany, India and Japan. These two countries have also supported an increased presence by African countries. China, which has used the power of veto least, has supported a stronger representation of developing countries and not surprisingly opposed Japan's membership. Limitations of space does not permit a detailed discussion of various proposals on the table.

## **Conclusions**

Most agree that reform is overdue. After all, the UN was formed after the war to address specific issues at the time. There was a sub-text too: the victors of the Great War wanted to maintain their dominance and guide the other nations in a particular way both economically and politically. The Cold War soured things somewhat with the result that former allies became adversaries. As a result, UNSC was mostly ineffective during this period. The exceptions are the interventions during the Korean War and the Suez Crisis.

The world is a different place now and one must take account of the changed dynamics of the current geo-politics. Trump's America is also different while Putin is trying to re-introduce the ways and means of the old USSR. Then there is North Korea and Iran. And reforms must address not only the issue of membership, both permanent and regional but also the working methods of the UNSC.

We must live in hope that the reforms will be agreed eventually so that we can leave a world at peace offering fairness, dignity and opportunity to all. The next generation deserves it.

# The End of the Mardi Gras

***By Dr. G. P. P. Silva***

*MBBS (Ceylon) DPH (London)*

*FRIPHH (London)*

*Consultant in Community Medicine*



The Fateful Day for the Planet Earth passed with the preceding period of doubt, trepidation and dismay. This date was the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 2012, which was based on the finding that the Mayans had completed calendars up to this date. The expected disaster was not to be. Hence the carnival continuous without restraint and with scant regard for the future of the Planet and its occupants.

The Ultimate goal of the process of evolution appeared to culminate in the creation of Man – Homo sapiens with super intelligence and placed at the zenith of the pyramid of all living forms. The Responsibility bestowed on the Human species by the Creator (almighty God, Allah, Krishna, Providence or the Karmic Force) has been grossly ignored and violated.

A weaver bird or a Squirrel would harmlessly gather a few fibres from the surroundings to construct a temporary abode to protect its young from the hazards of nature. Man on the contrary knows no limits in exploiting nature, utilizing every possible resource even to the point of total depletion of that resource.

The process of so called Development accelerated following the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War reaching unprecedented proportions. While the Industrial Revolution benefitted the more prosperous countries Europe, USA, Canada; the countries that had to bear the ignominy of being servile for several centuries languished with poverty and squalor. The establishment of the People's Republic of China, that country too joined the fray to make matters worse for the earthlings. China's economic growth rate increased rapidly and remained at around ten percent for the last three decades or so. The use of Natural Resources, Development and Energy use go hand in glove. Fossil Fuels reached critical levels escalating the prices to unimaginable heights. The consumers were compelled to look for alternative energy sources, in order to produce goods at competitive rates. The other strategic consideration was the massive revenue generated by the Oil producing countries creating a shift in the Economic Dominance from the West.

The Environmental Degradation as a sequel of the Fossil Fuel use became the next consequence for the world community. Many Earth summits were held at considerable expense in attempts to limit the spewing out of Green House Gases - Carbon Monoxide and Dioxide Methane, Sulfur Dioxide, Nitrous Oxide etc.

Summits held in Rio de Janeiro, Kyoto, and Johannesburg Hong Kong and more recently in Paris ended up with resolutions. They turned out to be wasteful escapades only serving the purpose of Grand Get to Gathers for the heads of States. Few countries displayed any propensity towards conforming with the resolutions at these summits. The cost involved in holding these meetings itself was tremendous. Global warming one of the main sequelae of the use of Fossil Fuels, now threatened the very roots of the

## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

continuance of the present Lop Sided Civilization. The worst offenders are hit by major natural disasters – Unprecedented Floods, Frequent Tornadoes Cyclones, El Nino phenomenon and Smog-bound Cities etc. Development bereft of careful controls will always be accompanied by unforeseen calamities. The people in the third world and may be a fourth world of absolutely poor communities continue to suffer with extreme poverty and squalor and contributing minutely to Global Warming.

Of the 7.3 billion people on the planet 1.2 billion have no drinking water of acceptable standards and no water for other needs. 900 Million People are starving and another 1 billion or so consuming the bare necessities of food.

While 900 million STARVE TO DEATH about a third of the world's population mainly in the wealthy countries as well as the indecently rich in the poor countries EAT TO DEATH.

In the latter segment an individual requires only a THIRD of the food they consume. The other TWO THIRDS is consumed in order to be afflicted by a Non Communicable Disease and thereby nourishing the Medical Professionals and the Medicine Cartels.

The untoward outcome of Economic Prosperity is over consumption of food and less physical activity. Gluttony leads to OBESITY (60 Present of people are obese in the developed world and 30 present in the poor countries) and the attendant ills - Diabetes mellitus, Hypertension, Ischemic Heart Disease, Arthritis and Malignancy.

The fruits of development are vigorously drained away by over consumption and depriving the earth's resources for the succeeding generations.

The UN has come forward with programs such as Freedom from Hunger in the sixties and seventies, Water Decade from 1981 -1990, Health For All in the year 2000, Millennium Development Goals 2000 – 2015, and Sustainable Development Goals 2016 – 2030.

All these Programs were not without benefits but did not achieve what was expected; shortfalls in achievements being due to lack of awareness of the beneficiaries and poor commitment on the part of the implementing governments. The MDGs were simple, comprehensive and should have been closely monitored, evaluated and given a further decade to implement rather than imposing a more complicated SDGs on the recipient communities.

Had the MDGs been achieved the deprived countries would have been elevated to a status enabling them to join the consumer spree not being aware of what is actually necessary to lead comfortable lives.

This in turn would lead to greater consumption aggravating the Global Warming. Hence for any Development Goals to be more meaningful a parallel set of Corrective Development Goals to curtail wasteful consumption on production of non-essential goods should be in place. Affluence is destroying the Earth's Environment. It appears that any measures to mitigate Environmental

Degradation is already long delayed. Urgent situations call for drastic measures if any impact is to be expected in the short term.

Development will be a snare and a dilution unless plausible checks and controls are embodied into the development process in order to cause minimum possible damage to the environment.

## **Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

The Corrective Goals should address the burning issues of Global Warming and a few urgent measures are mentioned below.

1. Drastic reduction in the use of Fossil Fuels by limiting the Fossil Fuel driven motor vehicles.
2. Gross reduction in consumption of MEAT and MILK with a view to reducing METHANE being added to the environment.
3. Reduce the production of unwanted redundant goods.
4. Save the oceans from pollution with industrial waste, plastics and by products such as Mercury, Dioxin, Furan and other toxic materials.

Ocean vegetation is dwindling rapidly and its function of carbon sequestration is interfered with.

Fish harvests are declining as many species of marine life are endangered and fast disappearing. The oceans are expected to be totally unproductive by 2045.

5. Reverse the process of DEFORESTATION, Degradation of Forests and DESERTIFICATION globally in order to protect Vegetation, Wild Life and Water Resources by adopting Massive Scale Re AFFORESTATION programs everywhere to achieve this goal.

Bhutan boasts of 60 percent forest cover and Bhutan is Carbon Negative which means Bhutan emits less Carbon Dioxide than its forests absorb. Hence Bhutanisation of all the countries seems the only SOLACE for humanity.

6. An appreciative reduction of the Production of Armaments and Military Hardware. In this regards the permanent Members of the UN Security Council are the worst offenders.
7. To undertake Scientific Research to determine the damage caused to nature with the use of many forms of man-made radiation, electronic and telecommunication devises.

This may will be interfering with the life circles of useful insects such as BEES, DRAGONFLIES and the like.

8. Limiting population growth by making available Family Planning services to the entire world population.
9. Adopt simple Life Styles to reduce consumption in all spheres of human activity to a minimum.

**Inclusiveness and Multilateralism - 2019**

A population of nine (09) billion is forecast for 2050. Could the earth sustain such numbers, perhaps not! If not the Earth will be free from the Earthlings sooner than anticipated, none left to blame others nor to take the blame. In such an event should the Maker decide to create a new world then the greatest need is a less greedy, caring, sharing breed of intelligent beings as Guardians of the Planets.



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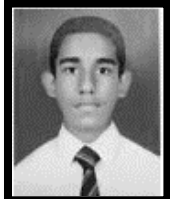
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Mahinda College, Galle



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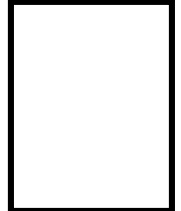
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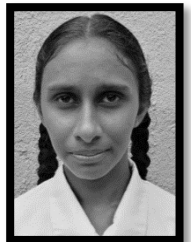
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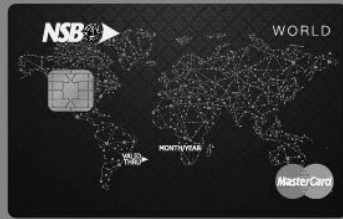
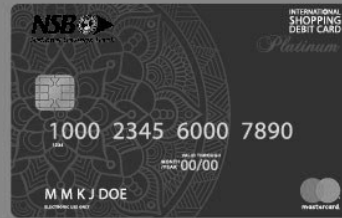
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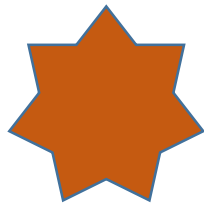
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