



# Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations



## Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka co-hosts 20th Session of the 'Summer Youth Assembly' at the UN

The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka co-hosted the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the 'Summer Youth Assembly' along with the Permanent Missions of Kenya and Portugal, in collaboration with the Friendship Ambassadors Foundation. The opening ceremony was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August in the General Assembly Hall at the UN Headquarters, and continued with a number of panel discussions, workshops and interactive events until the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, under the theme "Society for all: Equity and Inclusion for a Sustainable Future." The opening ceremony was attended by over 800 youth delegates from over 110 countries.

The Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera in addressing the opening segment of the Assembly, and with reference to the theme of this session, said that inclusion becomes more meaningful if inclusion is based on equity and that equity is central to development. All these factors go in tandem and become key aspects for building a strong and healthy society. He also underlined the urgent need to focus on education, especially in the form of skills development and innovation in order to address the practical realities of the present day evolving world. Dr. Perera also noted that the Government of Sri Lanka recognized the challenges youth have to face in society, and had launched targeted programmes to address many of the concerns of youth with a view to achieving inclusive and sustainable society.

President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Peter Thomssen noted that 65 of the 169 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals is focused on empowering and enabling

youth. He further emphasized that the vast potential of the 1.8 billion young people across the world is actual the central driving force that will take the world to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.



H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera delivers his remarks at the opening segment

Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, also addressed the gathering and said that her belief is that the present young generation can be the first generation to end poverty and the last generation to fight for climate change. She noted that the role of youth should be recognized as a leading one in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and reiterated that "there is no better investment than in the capacities and potentials of young people and there is no better fight than the fight for the world we want."

Permanent Representatives of the Permanent Mission of Kenya and the Deputy-Permanent Representative of the Mission of Portugal also spoke at this opening event. The event was webcast on UN Web TV.

## Permanent Mission mourns the passing of disability rights activist Mr. Senarath Attanayake



It is with profound sorrow that this Mission learned the passing of Mr. Senarath Attanayake after a brief illness, in Colombo, on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2017.

Mr. Attanayake had been an active and vocal advocate for disability rights in Sri Lanka, receiving the 2016 Henry Viscardi Achievement Award in recognition of his work. He was the first person with a disability in Sri Lanka to be an elected representative in a Provincial Council and the only person with a disability to hold a ministerial portfolio in a Council. He represented Sri Lanka from 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of State Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and at the High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development held at the United Nations in New York in September 2013. An old boy of Royal College Colombo, Mr. Attanayake was also an Attorney-At-Law.

Mr. Attanayake's passing is a great loss, in particular to persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka as well as to disability rights advocates across the globe, as his passionate activism on securing the rights of persons with disabilities left an indelible mark in the field of disability rights. The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka in New York is grieving this loss with his bereaved family.