



# Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations



## Historic Ceylon Tea Party makes its way across the globe to New York



H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera delivers the welcome address

Diplomats, Journalists, business owners, traders and buyers flocked to the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka in New York to become a part of history as Sri Lanka celebrates 150 years of the Ceylon tea industry on the 6th of July 2017.

The global tea party spanning more than fifty cities in the world was held with the collaboration of the Sri Lanka Tea Board and the Colombo Tea Traders' Association. The celebrations at the

Mission premises in New York also featured a photo exhibition titled *"The Story of Ceylon Tea"* that included banner style story boards narrating the story of Ceylon Tea, beautiful Black & White prints of a bygone era and large colorful panels detailing the health benefits of tea.

The Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York Ambassador Dr. Amrith Rohan Perera in welcoming ambassadors and other guests noted that the Sri Lanka tea industry has the most developed marketing and value adding capacity amongst the tea producing countries in the world. Sri Lanka therefore, has the highest percentage of value added exports amongst all tea producers and has one of the most advanced and competitive Auction centers that adds to the total value.

Sustainability, both environmental and social take pride of place. Sri Lanka tea industry adheres to almost all the international conventions, agreements and certifications related with the environment, including the Montreal Protocol to protect the Ozone layer. It is the first "Ozone Friendly" certified tea in the world, the ambassador also said.

Dr. Perera also stated that North America is the world's most lucrative market for tea and that Ceylon Tea has a long relationship with the USA.

**Gail Gastelu** the owner/publisher of The Tea House Times currently serving on the Tea Association of the USA's Specialty Tea Institute Advisory Board also spoke.

Guests queued up to taste different flavored teas from the various regions in Sri Lanka, flavored teas, iced tea, tea punch, tea biscuits, as well as other traditional food items. Guest were able to smell the aroma of Sri Lanka tea samples on display, view the gift teas and exhibits, experience the serenity of Sri Lanka's cascading tea gardens, and learn about tea production from leaf to exhilarating cup. Background music during the tea party included popular Sri Lankan melodies.



Ms. Gail Gastelu, owner/publisher of The Tea House Times, speaks at the event

Tea has been the flavor of the day at the United Nations in New York due to the enthusiastic participation and organization of events by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN in the month of May, June and July featuring Ceylon Tea. This included a week long exhibition and tea tasting at the United Nations in New York, participation in an international Bazaar organized by the UN and participation by Sri Lanka at the Le Salon du Café/Thé – an international tasting adventure, organized by the UN Correspondents Association (UNCA) in collaboration with the Arab Ladies Club at the UN (ALUN). Click [here](#) for more photos.

# ‘World Youth Skills Day’ celebrated in New York

The World Youth Skills Day was celebrated for the third consecutive year on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The event was organized by the Permanent Missions of Sri Lanka and Portugal, the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy for Youth, ILO and UNESCO. Resolution A/res/69/145, promoted by Sri Lanka was adopted in November 2014, declaring 15 of July as a day dedicated to the development of youth skills. This year’s event was held under the theme ‘Skills for the future of work’ and was co-chaired by the Permanent Missions of Sri Lanka and Portugal.

H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly, in delivering the opening statement at the opening segment of the event, noted that “Investing in young people, and realizing the demographic dividend, is one of the most effective, long-term and exponential investments Governments can make to achieve the 2030 Agenda and realize a future that is safe, secure and prosperous for all.”

Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef d’ Cabinet while making a statement on behalf of the UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, “Young people are some of the greatest change-makers and innovators we have. We must help young women and men to achieve their potential not only for their own sake, but for all of us, and our communities and societies.”

The Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera, addressing the opening session of the event, said that the world has witnessed a rapid change in the patterns of employment and related technologies. He underlined that on the one hand the world is experiencing a rapid expansion of technologies such as ‘automation’ which aims at decreasing human labour but on the other, the economists are calling for the creation of new employment opportunities. While pointing out that this dilemma underlines the importance of preparing for the future, he expressed that the need of the hour is managing the transition in the economy and the society in a holistic manner, carefully balancing the contending interests involved. [Click here for his full statement.](#)

Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, the newly appointed Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth made her maiden public intervention at this event. She underlined that “With the 2030 Agenda, Member States have committed to substantially increase the number of youth who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. They recognized that without skilled and employable young people, our chances of achieving the Goals are greatly diminished. It is time to take that commitment seriously.”

Ambassador Álvaro Mendonça e Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the UN, Mr. Christophe Perrin, Deputy Director General of the ILO, and Ms. Marie Paule Roudil, Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office in New York on behalf of Ms. Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director General, also spoke at the opening session.

The opening session was followed by a high level Ministerial roundtable discussion moderated by ILO. H.E. Kristian Jensen, Minister of Finance of Denmark, H.E. Imad Fakhoury, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation of Jordan and Hon. Karunarathna Paranawithana, Deputy Minister of Skills Development and Vocational Training of Sri Lanka, Ms. Susan Schorr, International Telecommunication Union, Ms. Brandee McHale, President of the Citi Foundation and Ms.



Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, Special Envoy on Youth, speaks at her first public engagement since her appointment

Jiwon Park of the Major Group on Children and Youth were panelists of this discussion.

Hon. Karunarathna Paranawithana pointed out that Sri Lanka is on track in achieving the SGD goal 4.4 on substantially increasing the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship by 2030. He said that one of the ideologies behind achieving this goal is to provide free vocational skills, including digital skills in line with the educational skills in Sri Lanka.

A webcast of the event can be viewed [here](#).



H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, addresses the opening session

# High-level participation by Sri Lanka at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development



Hon. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera delivers his statement at the HLPF General Debate

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, was held from 10th-19th July 2017 at the UNHQ, New York. This year the HLPF was held in the form of a series of interactive panel discussions under the theme “*Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world.*” A number of side events were held on the sidelines of the HLPF.

Hon. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera, Minister of Sustainable Development and Wildlife, led the delegation of Sri Lanka at the HLPF which included Mr. Uchita De Zoysa, sustainable development advisor to the Ministry, Dr. Samantha Kumara Kithalawaarachchi, Director, Presidential Task Force on Drug Prevention, and officials from the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka. Hon. Susil Premajayantha, Minister of Science, Technology and Research also visited New York to moderate a session of the HLPF. Dr. A.J. Satharasinghe, Director General, Department of Census and Statistics also attended a session.

At the general debate, Hon. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera made two statements, one on 17th July 2017 in Sri Lanka's capacity as the chair of the Group of 15, and the other on 18th July 2017 in his national capacity. The national statement highlighted the actions that Sri Lanka has taken so far to implement the Sustainable Development Goals at national level. Preparation of the National SDG Action Plan and the plans to launch the National SDG Roadmap by the end of the year were highlighted.

Hon. Susil Premajayantha, Minister of Science, Technology, and Research, at the invitation of the UN, moderated Session 14 of the HLPF entitled *Advancing science, technology and innovation for the SDGs* on 13th July 2017. This Session extensively explored the policy options and actions for advancing science, technology and innovation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Mission of Sri Lanka co-hosts event 'Massive obstacle to development - Alcohol Harm' held on the sidelines of the HLPF

The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka co-hosted a side event entitled 'Massive obstacle to development - Alcohol Harm' along with IOGT International, which was held on 11th July 2017 on the sidelines of the 2017 High Level Political Forum in the United Nations Headquarters. H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka delivered the welcome address, in which he noted the impact alcohol abuse has in achieving the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development, particularly in the context of "SDG 3.5 specifically under-



H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, delivers the Welcome Address

lines the harmful use of alcohol and underlines the need to 'strengthen prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol'. This directly applies to overarching SDG goal of 'Ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages'. Panelists included Ms. Kristina Sperkova of IOGT International, Dr. Samantha Kumara Kithalawaarachchi from Sri Lanka, and speakers from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, UNDP, and Friends of Recovery, USA.

# H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera invited as a panelist to the at the launch of the 6th WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic

World Health Organization's 6<sup>th</sup> Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic was launched on 19th July 2017 at a solemn event held at the One UN Millennium Hotel in New York. H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations had been invited to participate as a panelist at the high-level panel discussion that followed the launching of the report.

President Tabaré Vázquez of Uruguay made welcome remarks at the event through a video link. In addition to Ambassador Perera, Dr. Jorge Basso, Minister of Public Health of Uruguay, Dr. Douglas Bettcher, Director, Prevention of Non-communicable Diseases, WHO, and Dr. Joanna Cohen of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg Scholl of Public Health, USA participated in as panelists. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of WHO and Mr. Michael R. Bloomberg, Founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and WHO goodwill Ambassador for Non-Communicable Diseases delivered special remarks.

Sri Lanka was invited to this high-level panel discussion in view of the substantive amount of work it has done to fight the tobacco menace at national level.

At the high-level panel discussion Ambassador Perera was invited to share some of Sri Lanka's experiences with the tobacco industry and comment on Sri Lanka's commitment to tobacco control.

In response, Ambassador Perera elaborated on the action taken by the Government of Sri Lanka with the personal supervision and intervention of His Excellency the President to counter the threat posed by tobacco.

He stated that the Government of Sri Lanka took a number of very important policy decisions regarding



H.E. Dr. Rohan Perera, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, speaks as a panelist at the launch of the Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic

tobacco control in the past decade. In his intervention, Ambassador Perera further explained that the Ministry of Health had issued a circular prohibiting manufacturing, import, or sell smokeless tobacco products, e-cigarettes containing tobacco, and cigarettes that are flavored, colored, or sweetened.

He added that a Presidential Task Force has been established to monitor the situation with regard to drugs and narcotics, which holds monthly review meetings under His Excellency the President's direction where all relevant sectors meet to assess the progress and make multi-sectoral policies and plans.

Ambassador Perera added that these measures were further strengthened by one of the most significant and far-reaching steps taken by H.E. President Maithripala Sirisena to enact the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol (Amendment) Act in March 2015 stipulating 80% pictorial warning to be placed on cigarette packets.

He reiterated Sri Lanka's commitment to tobacco control, and expressed that Sri Lanka's efforts in controlling the tobacco epidemic was strengthened by the political guidance and leadership from His Excellency the President and Hon. Minister of Health.

He also announced Sri Lanka's decision as reported in the press today, to ban using tobacco and arecanut in betel quids apart from smokeless tobacco products and mixtures that contain tobacco, which was received by the audience with applause.

The panelists agreed that the Global Conference on NCDs, to be held in Uruguay in October 2017, will bring much needed attention to the need to scale up action on NCDs worldwide. The key message of the discussion was that progress so far has been impressive, but more can be done – and must be done – if the world wants to curb this deadly epidemic.

Substantial progress in low and middle income countries in controlling tobacco, in particular the progress in implementing pictorial warnings on packaging, importance of monitoring tobacco consumption patterns, declining smoking prevalence at global level, and the lack of progress in taxation on tobacco products as a means of controlling it are some of the key highlights of this year's WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, which was launched that day.

# Sri Lanka participates at the Secretary General's retreat on Management Reform

The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka was represented by Deputy Permanent Representative Ambassador Sabarullah Khan and Minister Ms. Sonali Samarasinghe at the Secretary General's retreat on Management Reform held on 27 July 2017 in the Trusteeship Council Chambers, UNHQ. The retreat began with a panel presentation by Secretary General H.E. Antonio Guterres and his Internal Review Team which included Under-Secretary-General Atul Khare. One of the key points highlighted during the discussion was the budget which would be submitted annually instead of biennially as is the current practice, and would be provided simultaneously to the Committee on Program and Coordination and the Ad-hoc Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

A number of member states intervened to express that they were happy the review was an internal and not external one, and raised a number of issues in the process which included:

prohibitive pricing of the Delegates Dining Room, how accountability will be assessed given the tasks of the UN, the cost factor involved in the envisaged reform, whether it would necessitate an increase in cadre, who will be in charge of the reform, among others. States also urged that the Human Rights and Development pillars should not benefit more than the Peace and Security pillar, and the disconnect between mandates member states give and the ability of the Secretariat to implement them should be addressed.

With regard to an annual budget, member states inquired as to why the budget was changed back to an annual one. The Secretary-General states that Member States run more efficiently with an annual budget presentations. Member States also raised concerns on been past attempts at management reform, and how it would be different this time. Mr. Guterres emphasized that the key issue would be the ownership of the reform process by both the Secretariat and



Ambassador Sabarullah Khan, Deputy Permanent Representative, and Ms. Sonali Samarasinghe, Minister, at the lunch hosted by UN Secretary-General during the Management Reform retreat

Member States. The Internal Review Team identified that there is an overall culture of mistrust between the secretariat and member states, and indicated the issues that need to be addressed with proposals on how to address them.



Sri Lanka delegation prepares for meetings with the CLCS Sub Commission established to hear Sri Lanka's Submission, between 31st July—4th August 2017



Ms. Sonali Samarasinghe, Minister, deliver a statement at the General Assembly on Agenda Item 118: UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy (28th July 2017) Click [here](#) to read the full statement