



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement to be delivered during the General Debate at the 20th Session of the of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), 27 November-1 December 2023**

*\*Duration of the Statement- 5 minutes*

**Madam President,**

At the outset, I congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of the 20<sup>th</sup> General Conference of UNIDO. I also welcome the other members of the Bureau. I assure you of our fullest cooperation in the successful conduct of this Session.

**Madam President,**

Sri Lanka associates itself with the statement by the Group of 77 and China.

My delegation takes note of the introductory remarks by Director General Gerd Müller. We reassure him of Sri Lanka's support for his dynamic leadership.

**Madam President,**

At this time last year, amidst multiple global crises, Sri Lanka was going through one of the most difficult periods in its recent history, due to

unprecedented economic challenges. Those challenges had a devastating impact on people's lives, driving more than half of the country's population into 'multidimensional vulnerability', jeopardizing Sri Lanka's past development gains.

The reforms, the Government has since initiated, have been directed towards laying the foundation for economic stabilization and recovery. People of Sri Lanka are already witnessing positive outcomes of these measures. The reforms have revived confidence, internally and externally, relating to the progress of the country.

**Madam President,**

Sri Lanka has remained resilient in the face of multiple challenges it has faced. Sri Lanka has taken all opportunities such crises provide to learn, effect reforms, and bounce back. Sri Lanka considers this pivotal moment also as a chance to reset its development model, towards green, resilient, and inclusive growth, which builds on competitiveness, digital and energy transition.

In this endeavour, among several policy initiatives, Sri Lanka has formulated a National Policy for Industrial Development and presented to the Cabinet of Ministers. At the same time, a comprehensive five-year strategic plan related to industrial policy has been developed, and its implementation is already underway.

**Madam President,**

The current global challenges demonstrate the continued importance for multilateral solutions on shared priorities.

In this context, my delegation acknowledges the pivotal role UNIDO plays in facilitating inclusive sustainable development, especially in developing countries that face similar challenges to achieve the SDGs, particularly SDG 9.

My delegation also acknowledges UNIDO's assistance in facilitating projects, including the Country Programme 2021-2025, which sets out support for the growth and diversification of Sri Lanka's manufacturing sector.

**Madam President,**

My delegation takes note of the Director General's report on the UNIDO activities related to digital transformation, innovation and artificial intelligence.

This year, Sri Lanka launched a digital economy 2030 Master Plan 'DIGIECON 2030', aimed at developing a regulatory framework towards transforming the country into an inclusive digital economy.

We believe that targeted industrial policies that foster digital transformation, innovation and circularity should be at the forefront, to build sustainable and resilient economies against possible future disruptions.

To ensure that digital transformation does not exacerbate existing inequalities, my delegation urges UNIDO to expand its assistance in the adoption of digital technologies, innovation and AI, especially by the industries in the developing countries.

**Madam President,**

My delegation welcomes the endorsement of UNIDO's strategy in response to climate change during the last Industrial Development Board. We have taken note of the update on the development of the action plan for the implementation of the Strategy. We further welcome UNIDO activities relating to the environment, energy and circular economy.

The current multiple environmental crises affecting billions of people, wildlife and properties, are reminders of the urgent need to decarbonize the world. Disproportionately affected are the countries of the global South, which are the least responsible for universal emissions but the most vulnerable to their detrimental impact. In our transition to a new post-carbon world, global investment and trade flows must address this mounting climate debt.

In this context, **Madam President,** Sri Lanka recognizes Green Hydrogen as an important aspect that offers a unique opportunity to tackle key socio-economic challenges. Accordingly, the National Hydrogen Roadmap, which was launched in August 2023, aims to address these challenges through a flexible and adaptive approach. My delegation is looking forward to establishing possible cooperation with UNIDO to make this Green Dream a reality.

**Madam President,**

My delegation takes note with appreciation of the progress made through UNIDO's Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2020–2023.

Sri Lanka recognizes the invaluable contribution of women to the social and economic development of the country. Women represent half of the working population in Sri Lanka and they excel in higher education. The increasing number of Sri Lankan women being engaged at all levels of public, private, administrative and corporate sectors is extremely encouraging.

Sri Lanka remains committed towards sustainable policies that ensure equality and empowerment of women and integrated gender-related priorities into government plans and legal frameworks. In 2023, Sri Lanka adopted its first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, for the period 2023 – 2027, with the support of the Government of Japan and UN Women. The Plan adds to the country's legal and policy frameworks to protect and empower women.

**Madam President,**

Sri Lanka joins the call for UNIDO to give special emphasis and adopt innovative approaches on capacity building, upskilling and training programmes in the developing countries, in order to put the developing countries and economies in transition on the path towards economic and social prosperity, through inclusive and sustainable industrialization.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Sri Lanka's commitment to build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation, which is integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. Sri Lanka also reaffirms its commitment to continued cooperation with UNIDO.

Thank you.