

Welcome Remarks by Honourable Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, Minister of Disaster Management, Ministry of Disaster Management, Government of Sri Lanka

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen!

“It is my pleasure to be here today and to welcome you all to this Conference which is addressing an important global challenge as well as challenges relevant to Sri Lanka. I understand that the experts from several countries such as Germany, Italy, UK, Pakistan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, and Nepal have travelled a long way to take part in this conference.

As you know we see a significant growth in natural disasters during the last few decades at a global level. In this context, Sri Lanka is increasingly facing many natural disasters such as floods and landslides.

The Ministry of Disaster Management was established after the devastating Tsunami that we experienced in 2004. The vision of my ministry is to create a safer Sri Lanka. We are committed to facilitating harmony and the prosperity and dignity of human life through effective prevention and mitigation of natural and man-made disasters in Sri Lanka. Under my Ministry we have the National Council for Disaster Management, Department of Meteorology, Disaster Management Centre, National Building Research Organisation and National Disaster Relief Centre - working together to build disaster resilience in Sri Lanka.

Since the establishment of the Ministry of Disaster Management in 2004, we have managed to improve our capabilities in reducing and responding to disasters. However, we know that we still have a long way to go in creating a world class approach for disaster risk reduction, responses and resilience planning. As the severity of the disasters are getting worse over time we need to respond by improving our approach to disaster management by reducing the vulnerability of community and infrastructure in order to safeguard the lives of our citizens and the economy.

It is always good to revisit our approaches, identify limitations and strengthen our capacity in managing disasters. Projects such as MOBILISE gives the opportunity to bring new impetus into our disaster management approaches.

I was pleased that the MOBILISE project led by the University of Salford in UK, together with the University of Moratuwa, University of Colombo as well as University of Peshawar (Pakistan) and the Universiti Tun Hussein Onn (Malaysia), is addressing very important disaster management research relevant to Sri Lanka. We have several world class Universities in Sri Lanka and therefore it is important that we exploit the intellectual capacities that we possess in these universities to develop efficient processes, technologies and organizational structures to better manage disasters. I believe that disaster

management provides our Universities with an opportunity to establish a sound interdisciplinary research approach to create real impact on the ground.

I was pleased to hear that the MOBILISE project is addressing a range of key themes that could potentially bring innovation into our disaster management practices. Specially we are interested in knowing how best to strengthen our collaboration approaches among various government organisations by utilizing the power of digital technologies. It is clear that the digital technologies such as space technologies and sensor technologies can play a key role in identifying slow onset disasters, vulnerability, rapid onset disasters and can help us to intervene well before the disaster strikes, hence saving lives.

It is clear that we also need to consider local risk sensitive urban development approaches to avoid further amplification of vulnerability and risks. Therefore we are very keen to work with the MOBILISE project team to see how our stakeholder collaboration can be further enhanced to create safer environments.

I was pleased to see a fantastic line of speakers in the agenda today addressing a range of subject areas. I hope the knowledge presented today can be further enhanced and applied in the context of Sri Lanka to build disaster resilience in Sri Lanka. I wish you a successful conference.”

Hon’ble Anura Priyadarshana Yapa
Minister
Ministry of Disaster Management, Government of Sri Lanka
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