

**VIDEO SPEECH OF HON.MANUSHA NANAYAKKARA,
MINISTER OF LABOUR and FOREIGN EMPLOYEMNT OF
THE DEMOCRATIC SOCAILIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA
AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 110TH SESSION OF
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE (ILC)**

9TH JUNE, 2022

Mr. President

Director General of the ILO

Hon. Ministers, Excellences, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a great pleasure and a privilege to deliver this statement on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka. At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to ILO for organizing ILC with remote participation facilities in the midst pandemic and economic crisis.

The report submitted by the Director General of the ILO to the conference on “Least Developed Countries” is timely in the context of Covid 19 and the world economic situation. Covid 19 has affected countries un-proportionally and Least Developed Countries are worst affected. Every country has started to experience the impact of Ukraine crisis before fully recovering from pandemic. We should be prepared to face any unrepresented challenges in the world of work.

The report also recommends to have a comprehensive social protection scheme. Sri Lanka, understanding the importance of comprehensive social protection, has already started to prepare a social security policy covering formal and informal workers with the technical assistance of ILO.

Mr. President

Sri Lanka has displayed its commitment to protect workers' rights during crisis and will continue to do so with its strong social dialog structure. During Covid 19 pandemic, we formed a tripartite Task Force consisting of major trade unions and employers to manage the issues related to the world of work. I am happy to indicate that we have felt the value of the social dialog and witnessed its contributions to keep the economy running to a certain level even during critical time. Further, it led us to a successful agreement for payment of wages of private sector employees thereby preventing them falling into poverty.

Enacting legislations for retirement age for private sector workers, increasing termination benefits by two fold, enhancing amount paid for fatal accident by four fold, raising age of admission to employment from 14 to 16 and revisiting the hazardous list occupations are some of the classical examples to display the commitment of Sri Lanka in protecting rights of workers.

Mr. President,

Sri Lanka is successful in managing Covid 19 and has vaccinated 82% of the population of over 12 years of age. We have been and continues to be swift in safeguarding the health of its population, including vaccinating its citizens. We have started to administrate 4th dose of Covid vaccine for vulnerable segment of the population.

However, here in Sri Lanka, while I'm speaking, our people are going thorough very difficult time. We are witnessing one of the worst economic crisis in the history. The situation is a culmination of multiple economic and political factors which have cumulated over time. The crisis is accelerated by foreign exchange shortages caused by a clampdown on tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic. With new political leadership, the country has been taking new measures to overcome this economic crisis.

In the midst of economic crisis, Sri Lanka requests, countries represented here, to extend their support in terms of investment, tourism and foreign employment. Sri Lanka is willing to discuss any proposals in this regard with interested countries.

We are expecting to work closely with ILO in the context present economic crisis. I am of the option that ILO can repurpose their priorities considering our economic crisis and provide required technical and financial assistance to

address immediate and short-term challenges that we face in the world of work.

We are confident that we can overcome this economic crisis with the help of international communities.

I Thank You.

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