

**Seventh session of the Committee on Trade and Investment, 27-29
January 2021**

Intervention – by Mrs. Poornima Gunasekera, Charge d' Affaires a.i., Deputy Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the UNESCAP

Agenda Item 2 - Recent trends and developments in trade and investment in Asia and the Pacific

Thank you Madam/Mr. Chair

Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, I congratulate you and the Bureau and wish to convey best wishes for a successful session at this very challenging time.

While noting the significant downward trend in global and regional trade in goods, commercial services, foreign direct investments, travel and tourism sectors, Sri Lanka appreciates the continuous efforts by the UNESCAP in bringing the countries in the region to one platform to enhance regional cooperation towards trade and investment rebound.

As a country which has a strong social protection system in South Asia, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Sri Lanka has been focusing on emergency health and economic measures, including several economic relief measures for the poorest segments of society and the most vulnerable sectors of business.

Despite the challenges encountered with increased expenditure in health sector, Sri Lanka has also been taking measures to enhance economic activities, for speedy recovery of trade, investment and tourism sectors.

Revision of taxes, allocating a 50 Billion Rupee - Re-financing Facility to support business, Debt Moratorium for interest and capital to all eligible sectors impacted by the economic recession, granting working capital loans and investment purpose loans are among these resilient activities.

In the long term, 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour'; the National Policy Framework of the government of President Gotabaya Rajapakse; recognizes the importance of developing strong trade relationships with Asian countries. *(Chapter 3)*. With its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka is accelerating work in becoming a logistic and trade hub. Sri Lanka is also opening doors to many logistical services, with its plan of making Colombo the Centre for global commercial and financial hub for national, regional and global level investors. *(Chapter 7)*

Taking another step for the revival of pandemic hit tourism, on 21st of January this year, Sri Lanka joined the very few countries in the world that opened its borders to the foreign travellers. Sri Lanka opens the country for tourists under the 'Safe and Secure bubble concept' and it is hoped that this will lead to a significant recovery in the tourism sector in 2021.

As suggested in the recommendations under Agenda Item 2, Sri Lanka also believes that the future trade agreements should include provisions to increase coordination and minimize disruption in trade and supply chains in times of crisis or pandemics.

Sri Lanka wishes to reconfirm its continuous support in promoting regional cooperation on trade and investment to build back better and accelerate actions to promote the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you