

## **Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development**

### Agenda Item 4: Voluntary National Reviews: follow-up and review to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

#### Statement of the Director General of the Sustainable Development Council

- Excellences, distinguished delegates, it gives me immense pleasure to inform this distinguished audience that Sri Lanka's second VNR led to a renewed ownership of the 2030 Agenda among different stakeholders.
- It was conducted at a critical juncture when we were emerging from the immediate impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic but was yet enduring the far reaching consequences of the economic downturn that followed immediately thereafter.
- As the first nation-wide stock taking since Covid-19 with the broadest level of stakeholder engagement, it provided us the opportunity for self-reflection and to explore innovative and transformative pathways to address the challenges.
- With the realization that the 2030 Agenda provides strategic direction to formulate the right policies and strategies to recover and rebuild as a nation, the government ministries and agencies have taken ownership for specific SDG Goals and Targets by identifying appropriate national level targets to better align government development programs with SDGs priorities.
- Excellences, the VNR brought to light the limitations in our data eco-system which undermine our capabilities for more effective policy targeting focusing the vulnerable communities.
- The Government understands the need to use a variety of data sources in our progress assessments and is currently exploring options and modalities for integrating data generated from non-government sources into the national statistical system.

- I am happy to inform you that the absence of a national level SDG monitoring and evaluation framework for robust progress assessments which was identified as a gap during the VNR process is currently being addressed.
- The VNR also highlighted the opportunities to leverage multi-stakeholder partnerships for SDG acceleration.
- This has led to increased dialogue and greater stakeholder engagement in the SDG process resulting in enhanced communication, coordination and collaboration among different stakeholders representing diverse sectors. The inter-agency coordination and sectoral convergence that have been achieved as a result has enabled Sri Lanka to develop the right mechanisms and tools to access alternative and innovative financing for SDGs.
- For example, the first ever Sri Lanka SDG Investor Map was the result of collective efforts of government agencies, the private sector and UNDP Sri Lanka offering the required market intelligence for private sector to align their investments with SDGs.
- Through our participation in the twinning programme with Pakistan facilitated by ESCAP, we learnt about the institutional mechanisms to foster greater political oversight of the SDG process and in discussion with the Sri Lanka Parliament, the Offices of the Prime Minister and the President, we are in the process of designing and institutionalizing such mechanisms in Sri Lanka.
- In concluding, I would like to reiterate Sri Lanka's commitment in taking forward the recommendations of the VNR and indeed learning from the experiences of our friends in the region would add immense value to this process. I would like to take this opportunity to also thank UNESCAP for their support to our VNR and for their continued support in taking the VNR recommendations forward.