

## Country Statement

Honourable Mr. Mahindananda Aluthgamage

Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Sri Lanka

Mr Chairperson,

Mr Director-General,

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, it is an honour and a pleasure for me to be here today to address the thirty-fifth Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC).

I take this opportunity to thank FAO for continuously providing support to Sri Lanka, during the past 40 years. FAO technical support helped us immensely to transform the agriculture sector from a livelihood subsector level to a dynamic income earning production sector, a vital pillar of our national economy.

The 35<sup>th</sup> Session of FAO APRC is being hold with a background of FAO transformational reform and at the juncture of global efforts in coping COVID-19 pandemic. The 35<sup>th</sup> Session of APRC has provided important platform, where Ministers of Agriculture, officials from Asia – Pacific region and delegations and representatives from Civil Society and private sector address emerging trends and challenges related to food and agriculture sector under the UN-FAO umbrella.

I am happy to note that there are strong synergies and coherences between the Regional Priority initiatives and national priorities of Sri Lankan government in the fields of promoting sustainable agriculture through innovation including digital agriculture solutions, building sustainable and resilient food systems, increasing national climate adaptation capacity in agriculture sector, and promotion of nature based solutions for wise of natural resources, and leveraging on digital technology to improve food security.

At this juncture, I would like to enlighten you that currently Sri Lanka is self-sufficient in most of the food commodities, but has issues in producing sufficient feed material and some other field crops.

At present, we are having projects and programmes to modernize the agriculture sector through increasing irrigation and water management techniques, promotion of home gardening, improving land use practices, digitalization of agriculture information for decision making, climate smart agriculture, and transformation of agriculture to agribusiness.

Also, we have identified that some of the issues in the sector such as poor profit margin for small scale farmers, non-availability of a proper insurance scheme for growers, fine-tuning of cropping zoning, improved agrochemical management, inability to predict seasonal forecast, non-availability of proper seeds are yet to be addressed. We look forward for FAO technical assistance in these areas to turn Sri Lankan agriculture sector into the next paradigm shift.

I am delighted that the Sri Lankan Government is taking programmatic approach to promote realization of SDG's and FAO's technical cooperation is closely aligned with National policy priorities in agriculture and plays a catalyst role in Sri Lanka.

I am more than happy to inform that FAO Representation in Sri Lanka has been gradually introducing transformational change measures to increase its in house technical expertise, policy advisory and analytical capacities. FAO Representation in Sri Lanka has assured us that the country programme will be strategized by adopting Thematic Portfolio Programmatic Approach to respond to the increasing demands of policy and advisory support for advancement of the Agricultural and Food sectors in Sri Lanka.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

While expressing my sincere wishes to all of you attending 35th Session of APRC, I expect this programme will identify most important challenge in the region and come up with tangible programmes to handle them successfully at regional and country levels.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to make our joint vision a reality!