

MEDIA RELEASE

Australia supports UN-Habitat to make Balangoda, Batticaloa, Ratnapura and Kalmunai resilient to disasters

Monday, 21 October 2013, Colombo, Sri Lanka: The Government of Australia provided AUD 1,000,000 (LKR 126 million) to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to support *Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Preparedness Plans* for the cities of Ratnapura, Batticaloa, Kalmunai and Balangoda. The plans for each city were officially launched at the BMICH in Colombo today.

The DRR and Preparedness Plans themed “Towards a Sustainable and Resilient City” were ceremonially handed over to the Chief Guest, Hon. Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Disaster Management, and the Guest of Honour, H.E. Robyn Mudie, the Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka by UN-Habitat and the Commissioner of Ratnapura, the Vice-Chairman of Balangoda, the Municipal Commissioner of Batticaloa and the Mayor of Kalmunai.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Guest at the event, Hon. Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Disaster Management stated that the Government of Sri Lanka is committed towards implementing disaster risk reduction activities with the support of UN agencies, and other committed partners. Extending his appreciation to UN-habitat and the project partners for implementing the project, the Hon. Minister stated that the Ministry of Disaster Management will continue its partnership with UN-Habitat for future initiatives.

The Guest of Honour at the official launch, H.E. Robyn Mudie, the Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka stated that Australia understands the devastating impact of natural disasters, and is battling large and destructive wildfires at this very moment. “Australia recognises that every dollar invested in preparation and planning can save a dollar and possibly much more in emergency response, rebuilding and recovery, as well as saving lives and protecting human health.” She stated that linking disaster risk reduction to urban planning as well as capacity building of local authorities and communities are vital to disaster prevention. She further stated that “in April 2013 Australia decided to support an expansion of this program to the additional four cities of Mullaitivu, Mannar, Vavuniya and Akkaraipattu,” due to the success of the programme.

Mrs. M.S.Mohomad, Secretary, Ministry of Disaster Management, Prof.P.K.S.Mahanama, Dean, Faculty of Architecture, University of Moratuwa, Mr Nimal Perera, Chairman, Urban Development Authority and Mr. Laxman Perera, UN-Habitat Country Programme Manager for Sri Lanka were present at the official launch.

The project “Disaster Resilient City Development Strategies for Sri Lankan Cities” has been implemented by UN-Habitat March 2012 to March 2013 in collaboration with the University of Moratuwa, Urban Development Authority, Disaster Management Centre, National Building Research Organisation and four Local Authorities and communities of Kalmunai Municipal Council (MC), Ratnapura MC, Batticaloa MC and Balangoda Urban Council. The main aim of the Project is to establish sustainable, disaster resilient and healthy cities and townships in disaster prone regions of Sri Lanka. The DRR and Preparedness Plans are an integral tool for city authorities in meeting this objective.

The Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness Plans for the four cities identify disaster risk reduction strategies for each city. The Plans have been prepared by conducting a comprehensive analysis of background information which includes baseline assessments, technical studies incorporating findings of vulnerability and risk assessments through stakeholder consultation.



The DRR and Preparedness Plan is an application of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), a tool that focuses on resilient city development. Fundamentals of the Plan and proposed projects are aligned with priorities for action from the HFA to establish the four cities as role model resilient cities in Sri Lanka.

Following the successful completion of the programme in Ratnapura, Balangoda, Batticaloa and Kalmunai, the Australian Government is providing additional funding for the initiative to be replicated in the cities of Mullaitivu, Vavuniya, Mannar and Akkaraipattu from 2013 – 2014. UN-Habitat is now implementing the second phase of the project in the above cities in collaboration with the Local Authorities and project partners.
