

National Conference on ‘Empowering Communities through Settlement Improvement in the Plantation Sector’ held in Colombo.



27 November 2017, Colombo, Sri Lanka: A national conference on ‘Empowering Communities through Settlement Improvement in the Plantation Sector’ was held today in Colombo. The conference highlighted key issues pertaining to the integration of Sri Lanka’s plantation sector into mainstream development in the country. The conference was organised by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) with funding by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

The main aim of the conference was to share good practices and lessons learned of the project ‘Human Development Initiative (HDI) through Empowerment and Settlement Improvement in the Plantation Settlements in Sri Lanka’ currently being implemented by UN-Habitat in the Nuwara Eliya District. This project is funded by KOICA and implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Hill Country New Villages, Infrastructure and Community Development.

Hon. U Palani Digambaram, Minister of Hill Country New Villages, Infrastructure and Community Development was the Chief Guest at the event. Mr. Chanaka Talpahwea, Country Programme Manager of UN-Habitat Sri Lanka welcomed the gathering and provided an overview of the HDI project. The Guest of Honour at the event, Mr Lee Dong-ku, Resident Representative, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) in Sri Lanka commended UN-Habitat for implementing the HDI project and in organising the conference. An overview of the National Plan of Action for the Plantation Community was provided by Ms Ranjini



Nadarasapillai, Secretary, Ministry of Hill Country New Villages, Infrastructure and Community Development. Mr. Srinivasa Popuri, Senior Human Settlement Officer, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, emphasised the importance of urban-rural linkages and mentioned that a people-centred approach can be a critical success factor in empowering communities in the plantation sector. Mr. M Vamadevan, Advisor, Ministry of Hill Country New Villages, Infrastructure and Community Development in his keynote address, highlighted the macro issues affecting the plantation communities and proposed recommendations to meet these challenges.

Several important themes pertaining to Sri Lanka’s plantation sector were discussed at the event through expert panel discussions. These included settlement planning, infrastructure and housing; governance and legal aspects; as well as lessons learned in implementing projects in the plantation sector. Panel discussions were followed by



interactive and productive discussions by the participants. The forum discussed key challenges as well as opportunities in developing both Sri Lanka's plantation sector as well as the plantation communities, through new, innovative, approaches.

The conference brought together national experts on the plantation sector, housing and infrastructure development, plantations as well as policy makers, Government officials, donors, development practitioners, Regional Plantation Companies, HDI project's beneficiaries and academics.

The HDI project was developed with the aim to empower plantation communities, and make them resilient with satisfactory living conditions, safer settlements, better access to basic services and improved livelihood skills. The project is being implemented in the Nuwara Eliya, Kotmale and Walapane DS Divisions in Nuwara Eliya District, from January – December 2017.