

Good morning one and all, Namaste ,AAYU BOWAN!! -

1) I am delighted to be here at the University of Colombo and I extend my sincere greetings to

-the honourable Vice Chancellor, Senior Prof.Lakshman Dissanayake,

-Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies Senior Prof. Nayani Melegoda,

-Programme Coordinator Professor K. Amirthalingam,

-Director , CCIS U-Dr. R Senathiraja,Director,

Faculty members, Researchers, dear students & all others in the gathering.

I extend my heartiest greetings to the honourable High Commissioner of India to Srilanka, His Excellency , Taranjit Singh Sandhuji . Sir, It is an honour & privilege to have you amidst us.

My congratulations to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo for having such an apt and extremely pertinent theme ,which I believe is pivotal to socioeconomic development of Sri Lanka ,India and all the countries in the context of global sustainable development goals:: **“AGENDA 2030: Way Forward to Sri Lanka’s Sustainable Development”**

While learning about Srilanka’s sustainable development ,I share my insights about Agenda 2030-Developments in India and how can the youth in India and Srilanka contribute in shaping the future.

Before we set the context of the talk today , I would like to quote the Father of our Nation Mahatma Gandhi who once said,

**“One must care about the world one will not see”**. Relating it to development One must care about development for the future generation , development which is sustainable and inclusive.

We all know that in 2015 we - India, Sri Lanka & other countries of the world came together at the UN to define a common vision of sustainable and inclusive development for humankind known as **Agenda 2030**.

## 2) WHAT IS AGENDA 2030

It includes a political declaration signed by 193 countries, September 25-27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, channels of implementation and follow up review mechanism.

In essence, a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with their 169 targets, **form the core of Agenda 2030**. These goals have been built upon the MDGs which covered 15-year period (2000-2015)

The SDGs, otherwise known as Global Goals constitute a universal agreement to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace & prosperity. The Agenda 2030 came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January ,2016.with the goals to be attained in next 15 years 2016-2030.

Dear students & researchers , in these years to come many of us will have retired , however you all will still continue taking actions based on the decisions that could have a direct bearing on achieving these goals Also, these 17 goals with 169 targets might seem too ambitious to be achieved at an individual level. However, each drop counts , every moment matters So, let’s start today to understand their importance and that of yours in their achievement.

## 3) WHY ARE THE SDGs IMPORTANT ;

SDGs are not only crucial to overall wellbeing of global humanity but also realistic and hence achievable as they have been developed through a series of long-drawn global consultative process and focus on how the entire global community must work together. They are **universal** and galvanize people from across various sections of society to work towards these commonly

defined goals. Another important facet of SDGs is that the SDGs provide a **long-term approach** to solving the world's most pressing problems. This long-term approach outweighs the shortsightedness of government policies, regardless of the political context.

Most importantly, The SDGs integrate in a very balanced manner the 3 pillars of sustainable development –Social, Environmental & Economic. *For the first time, planetary wellbeing has also been interwoven with human wellbeing in a very detailed and explicit manner.* (NITI Aayog)

In fact, they can be understood as a five-dimensional model of Sustainable development. The 5 P's – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. SDGs comprehensively cover all dimensions

I appreciate the Faculty of Graduate studies for the beautiful expression of The Five P's at this symposium.

**PEOPLE: The Social dimension – The first 6 Goals -SDG 1-6**

- SDG 1 No poverty,
- SDG 2 Zero hunger,
- SDG 3 Good health,
- SDG 4 Quality education ,
- SDG 5 Gender equality,
- SDG 6 Clean water & sanitation

**PROSPERITY: The Economic dimension-Next 5 Goals -SDG 7-11**

- SDG 7- Affordable and Clean Energy
- SDG 8- Decent Work and Economic Growth
- SDG 9- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- SDG10 - Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 11- Sustainable Cities and Communities

**PLANET : The Environmental Dimension –Next 4 Goals –SDG 12-15**

- SDG 12- Sustainable Consumption and Production
- SDG 13- Climate Action
- SDG 14- Life Below Water
- SDG 15- Life on Land

**PEACE & PARTNERSHIP**-The ethical dimension-Last 2 goals SDG16& 17

- SDG 16- Peace, Justice & Strong Institution
- SDG 17- Partnership for Goals

The goals 16&17 are enablers for achieving the other goals

All this to be achieved in a collaborative manner and this collaborative approach is quintessential for the success of the “Agenda’s ultimate aim : To transform the world.” Leaving no one behind and reaching furthest of the far.

Thus, they are MULTIDIMENSIONAL, CONCLUSIVE, INCLUSIVE, INTEGRATED, INDIVISIBLE, AMBITIOUS & UNIVERSAL

4) We know all countries have a shared responsibility to achieve the SDGs, and all have proactive and meaningful role to play locally, nationally as well as on the global scale.

**India and Sri Lanka** have a shared legacy of social, economic, political, intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic connect. Governments of both countries have deep engagements and friendly relations. Hence the SDGs offer an opportunity for both the nations to work together, to cooperate, collaborate ( **the three C's I believe in are Connect cooperate and collaborate** ) to

demonstrate their commitment to improving people's lives and the overall wellbeing of the planet. Like many other countries, Sri Lanka's development agenda too focuses on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It is heartening to know 83% of adult male and female in Sri Lanka have bank accounts, maternal mortality rate is low and various several noteworthy measures have been taken to ensure its focus on rural development, social protection and an inclusive approach towards growth of the country.

### **5) Initiatives of India with respect to Agenda 2030**

Let me briefly discuss how India has contributed till date to Agenda 2030:

India's spirit of Sustainable Global Development can be traced back to the ancient Indian phrases *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* meaning "the world is one family" and

*Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah ; Sarve Santu Nir-Aamayaah  
Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyantu; Maa Kashcid-Duhkha-Bhaag-Bhavet* It means -  
May all become happy; May none fall ill May all see auspiciousness everywhere;  
May none ever feel sorrow

To quote the Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his speech at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015,

*"Much of India's development agenda is mirrored in the Sustainable Development Goals. Our national plans are ambitious and purposeful; Sustainable development of one-sixth of humanity will be of great consequence to the world and our beautiful planet."*

India, as one of the fastest growing major economy of the world is prominently and uniquely placed to deliver on its commitments to inclusive and sustainable development.

Our Parliament has organized several forums to develop policy and action perspectives on poverty elimination, promoting gender equality and addressing climate change thereby reinforcing India's commitment to the national development agenda and SDGs.

**NITI Aayog**, the premier think-tank of the Government of India, is responsible for overseeing the implementation of SDG in India. The Aayog has carried out a detailed mapping of 17 Goals and 169 targets across different Central Ministries, Centrally

Sponsored Schemes and other major government initiatives. In their respective states most of the state government (sub-national governments) have carried out a similar mapping of the SDGs and targets to the departments and programmes.

A list of draft national indicators in light of the global SDG indicators, prepared by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation has been placed in the public domain for wider consultation

**Voluntary National Review Report is the** basis for international review of progress of SDGs. As a part of its role, NITI Aayog has presented on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at the United Nations, New York, the 1<sup>st</sup> Voluntary National Review on implementation of SDGs in the country. This year theme focused on '*Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world*' Goals 1,2,3,5,9,14,17 have been agreed upon in the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) as focus areas for this year. However, the nature of SDGs, is such that the advancement of one SDG may lead to progress in other goals as well.

Various initiatives have been taken by Government of India under the leadership of our honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi. The important ones being

**Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana** – An initiative for financial inclusion

**The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act**, for instance, has generated over 2 billion person-days of employment during 2016-17 alone, largely for the disadvantaged sections of society

“Beti Bachao Beti Pado” (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child).for gender equality

**Make in India, Start up India , Atal Innovation Mission** – to promote entrepreneurship and innovation More than 500 Tinkering Laboratories are being set up in schools across the country. Further, the India Innovation Index Framework has been launched for tracking and identifying promising innovations in the country. **Recently**, India's ranking in [Ease of Doing Business](#) has improved from 142 in 2014 to 100 in 2017 and further to 77 in 2018 (India jumps 23 ranks in 2018 over 2017).

The Goods and Services Tax (GST), is a path-breaking tax reform agenda with uniform and simplified form of indirect taxation. For mobilizing resources for the Clean India Mission, an innovative tax like the Swachh Bharat Cess (Clean India Cess) has also been levied. The FDI flows during the last three fiscal years have been boosted to USD 156 billion including a record-breaking USD 56 billion in the latest fiscal year due to proactive policy reforms

The fiscal devolution to states has been increased substantially (from 32 to 42 % of the central pool of tax proceeds) to enable the implementation of development interventions by sub-national governments,

Even as it combats poverty, India remains committed to protecting the environment. India has taken vast strides on the path of clean energy and is currently running one of the [world's largest renewable capacity expansion](#) programmes in the world.

Conferment of the United Nations' highest environmental honour - the 'UNEP Champions of the Earth' award on India's Prime Minister Modi, recognizing his leadership of the International Solar Alliance as well as his pledge to eliminate all single-use plastic in India by 2022 – all speak of India's commitment to the environmental goals of Agenda 2030.

Ms. Sushma Swaraj, our External Affairs Minister mentioned in her recent address about the Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledge to build a New India by 2022 when free India will be 75 years old. This New India will be:

- 1: Swachh Bharat, Swasth Bharat (Clean India, Healthy India);
- 2: Samarth Bharat, Surakshit Bharat (Prosperous India, Secure India);
- 3: Shikshit Bharat, Viksit Bharat (Educated India, Developed India);
- 4: Urjawan Bharat, Shaktiman Bharat (Energized India, Strong India).

She mentioned, That is our horizon for India in 2022. We are working to reach that horizon and contribute to development that is sustainable and inclusive.

Ayushman Bharat, the world's biggest health insurance programme, was launched by Prime Minister Modi. This revolutionary scheme will benefit 500 million Indians, who will get an insurance cover of Rs.500,000 per family per year.

A popular political phrase “[Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas](#)” meaning “Collective Effort, Inclusive Development” reflects India's National Development Goals, the spirit of which closely mirror the SDGs.

Reinforcing India's commitment to the national development agenda and SDGs, the country's Parliament organized several forums, including the South Asian Speakers' Summit in February 2017. An important role is being played by Civil Society Organizations, Corporate sector organizations including industry associations which have held consultations and initiated actions in various areas.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres praised India's progress on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular the pursuit of Sanitation for All and Affordable and Clean Energy, during his day-two official visit. So we see much has been achieved, however there is a lot to be done for a sustainable future.

6) With regards to the **way forward**, we can say a lot has been achieved in both India and Sri Lanka. But much more needs to be done. The pace has to be faster and the approach more inclusive so that the **benefits of development trickle down to the lowest in the strata ie leaving no one behind**.

While there are a number of challenges – data-related, financial, governance-related, technological, but together, one by one we can achieve all of them.

-By providing easy and affordable access to financial products and digital technology enhancement

-By Engaging and empowering all stake holders -private sector, civil society, NGOs, communities as well as political parties and government.

-By Engaging mutual benefit service oriented institutions, viz, Cooperatives at all levels ie village, district, state, national and international. In other words, from local to global levels and most importantly

**-By Engaging Youth.**

7) **Today's generation of youth** is the largest the world has ever known. One in every three persons living is under the age of thirty, and around ninety per cent of young people are living in developing countries, mainly in Asia and Africa. India and Sri Lanka are no different. We represent the biggest demographic group, accounting for over 34.3 % of the youth population (15-24), in India and 23% in Sri Lanka. Young Sri Lankans and Indians are more informed, more tech-savvy and more connected than any generation before. The SDGs are interwoven into the aspirations of the young people.

**So how do we bring change and prosperity to our countries?**

Any change, starts with an individual action and is shaped by our day-to-day attitude and behavior. This includes choices about the way we live, behave, produce, consume and invest. Everyone can make a difference by slightly altering the behavior and attitudes. For example:

Saving water & electricity by turning off lights and appliances when not in use;

Using green appliances and energy-saving light bulbs;

Using environment friendly products

Recycling paper

Avoiding food /other wastages

Buying only what you need

Sharing and caring

Helping the needy

Such initiatives may appear miniscule in themselves, but become large when taken by hundreds or thousands or millions of you.

Like the SDGs – India's and Sri Lanka's vision are broad and ambitious. Implementing it, goes beyond government and requires effort from everyone

**8) Dear students, to conclude what are your Take aways for TODAY . You have the power of thoughts, power of will, power of ideas and most importantly power of action to turn ideas into reality – Global goals into reality.**

Power of thought \_ Yes I CAN

Power of will - Take a pledge – YES I CAN, I WILL CONTRIBUTE IN MY OWN WAY FOR A BETTER SAFER PEACEFUL WORLD

Power of idea -New ideas need OHOM – Open heart and Open Mind.

Power of Action -So, leave with the passion to make a difference however you can, wherever you go, whatever path you choose.

Your Passion of turning your ideas turning into actions will help in fructifying the vision - AGENDA 2030

Your passion and actions holds the key not only to your happiness and well being but also to global peace security and prosperity

Friends ,The three keys words to remember are – **ACTION WITH PASSION TO ACHIVE THE VISION .**

As Lord Buddha said,

***‘ I do not believe in a fate that falls on men however they act ; but I do believe in a fate that falls on them unless they ACT’***

Once again, I express my sincere thank to the Vice Chancellor, Colombo University; Dean Faculty of Graduate studies; Coordinator of the Programme; students the change makers and most importantly Dr. Senathiraja for giving me this opportunity and your patient hearing.

I invite you all to India, University of Delhi, and my college SRCC. I hope India and Sri Lanka continue to identify the areas of common interests and work together to achieve SDGs.

Many thanks and best wishes for the successful Research symposium and continued friendship between India & Sri Lanka.

May the triple Gem bless you All  
Obata Stutiya ( Thank you)