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Launch of Report of the National Strategic Review of Food Security & Nutrition leading to Zero Hunger



The Report of the National Strategic Review of Food Security & Nutrition leading to Zero Hunger was launched by the Lead Convener of the Strategic Review and Chair, SAPRI, former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga on 13th February, 2017 at the BMICH, amidst a distinguished gathering.

The launch of the Report was the culmination of a national initiative led by the Government of Sri Lanka, supported by United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP), and coordinated by the South Asia Policy & Research Institute (SAPRI) and conducted over a period of six months. Madam Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of World Food Programme, Mr. David Kaatrud, Regional Director WFP, based in Bangkok, Ms. Una McCauley, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Sri Lanka and Ms. Brenda Barton, Country Director, Sri Lanka of the United Nations World Food Programme also graced the occasion.

The event commenced with the National Anthem of Sri Lanka, in Sinhala and Tamil. A video presentation of WFP next took place on the Sustainable Development Goals with emphasis on Goal 2, on Zero Hunger.

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Madam Chandrika Kumaratunga delivered the keynote address and commended the successfully concluded Strategic Review and its outcome in the form of a Report, which she hoped would lead to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 in Sri Lanka, to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture “. She stated that the recommendations of the Review could contribute to the equitable distribution of wealth, food and agricultural produce, which is essential at a time when the government and people are moving forward with the process of reconciliation. Although it appears as a daunting task in a global context, achieving Zero Hunger in Sri Lanka is a manageable target, with the availability of an educated population, advanced technology in agriculture as well as an organized agricultural service and a research sector. Proper coordination and effective implementation will lead Sri Lanka to achieve Zero Hunger ahead of time, she added. She thanked the President and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka for the patronage given to the strategic review process.

Addressing the gathering, Madam Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the World Food Programme commended the initiative and the commitment of the Lead Convener in accepting the challenge of convening a national strategic review related to Zero Hunger and leading the way.

She further expressed her hope that this commitment would offer new targets to the vulnerable people in the world, as Sri Lanka fulfills its share of a global initiative. With Sri Lanka declaring year 2017 as the Year of Poverty Eradication, the launch of the Report symbolized the country’s commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals through action.

The Report was the outcome of an extensive research and policy review carried out for a period of six months with the participation of a multitude of stakeholders at the national, provincial and district levels.

A significant feature of the process was its inclusivity, marked by the presence of the government sector as well as the Non-Government Organizations (NGO’s) sector with the attendance of the civil society, NGO’s including women and youth organisations, the private sector, the academia, and, United Nations Agencies, having an interest in the topic. The review was conducted and the outcome report compiled by a research team comprising the Institute of Policy Studies, taking the lead, the Medical Research Institute, the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute and the Department of Census and Statistics, together with UNWFP and SAPRI.

The Report of the Strategic Review was launched to the public domain electronically by the Chief Guest, former President Kumaratunga. A video presentation on the highlights of the Report took place thereafter.

Amongst the eminent invitees present were Hon. R. Sampanthan, Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament of Sri Lanka, Hon. Ravi Karunanayake, Minister of Finance, Hon. Duminda Dissanayake, Minister of Agriculture, Hon. M.A. Sumanthiran, Member of Parliament, Secretaries to Ministries, Ambassadors, High Commissioners and members of the Diplomatic Corps and United Nations Agencies, Provincial Secretaries, District Secretaries, senior government representatives, leading representatives from the civil society, academia and private sector, former Parliamentarians as well as former Ambassadors of Sri Lanka.

The full Report of the Strategic Review can be viewed online at

<http://www.thesapri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/NSRFSNZH.pdf>

Chair SAPRI in a one-to-one meeting with Head of United Nations World Food Programme



During her visit to Sri Lanka to participate in the launch of the report of National Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition Towards Zero Hunger, United Nations World Food Programme Executive Director Madam Ertharin Cousin called on former President and Chair SAPRI Madam Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, who was the Lead Convener of the Strategic Review.

Executive Director Cousin extended her gratitude to SAPRI Chair for leading the Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition in Sri Lanka to a successful conclusion during a period of six months and sharing its outcome through the Report of the Strategic Review Launched on February 13, 2017. She applauded SAPRI for the exceptional organization of the process which

culminated in the launch of the Report.

The two dignitaries discussed the importance of the Strategic Review in the light of Sustainable Development Goal 2, to, “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”. In Sri Lanka, with its high social development indicators the focus should be on nutrition and the need to consume correct types of food. Madam Cousin commended the Government of Sri Lanka for the progress already made in the food security and nutrition areas and emphasized that to reach the targets of achieving better food security and nutrition, particularly for children and pregnant and lactating mothers, a national effort was necessary with the participating of all stakeholders.

SAPRI Chair Madam Kumaratunga expressed the view that the next step should be to initiate a process of action towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Strategic Review with the Government of Sri Lanka taking the lead. Madam Cousin pledged the support of the World Food Programme for such an effort.

Pakistan High Commissioner visits SAPRI Office

SAPRI had the pleasure of welcoming High Commissioner Maj. Gen. Syed Shakeel Hussain of Pakistan, when he visited the Institute on 5th May 2017. Executive Director Geetha de Silva discussed with the High Commissioner the work that SAPRI was carrying out under different, political, economic, social and cultural themes. The High Commissioner was particularly interested in the project on ‘Building Religious Harmony’, and said that this was an initiative very relevant to South Asia. Commenting on establishing a direct line of communication with the Clergy and grassroots to create unity through diversity, he referred to similar initiatives conducted in Pakistan, involving Clergy and academics to counter extremism through timely interventions and interfaith dialogue.

Sinhala and Tamil Pre-school Children in Kolonna celebrate Sinhala-Tamil New Year Together



In a novel initiative towards building cultural ties at pre-school level, the Sinhala-Tamil New Year was utilized as a platform by the multi-ethnic community in Kolonna, in April 2017, to nurture the young mindsets on the importance of peaceful co-existence.

The event took place at the Kolonna Public Ground, in the presence of a number of political and community leaders. Chair SAPRI, Madam Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga

was represented on this occasion by Executive Director Geetha de Silva and a team of officials from SAPRI.

Mr. Ariyawansa Basooriya, Member of the Sabaragamuwa Provincial Council, and an ardent participant and supporter of SAPRI's "Building Religious Harmony" programme was the chief organizer of the event. The Sinhala-Tamil New Year celebration gave prominence to pre-school children from Sinhala and Tamil communities, who were enthusiastically performing cultural items, in the form of singing, dancing and drama. Although children had always been a crucial part of Kolonna's New Year celebrations, this was the first time that a celebration consisting purely of pre-school children was organized in the town's history. The idea was the brainchild of Mr. Basooriya, who considered the initiative to be a timely effort.

"I have been organizing New Year celebrations of a similar nature for the past 14 years, since I became a Provincial Council member. It is a perfect platform for people in Kolonna to converge at a festival they share, regardless of ethnic differences. This year, I decided to engage pre-school children in the area as the gift of culture and peace must be absorbed very early in life." Mr. Basooriya said.

The initiative of focusing on pre-schoolers is a welcome effort, as the idea to engage kindergarten students in promoting ethnic unity and social solidarity is a novel concept that follows a bottom to top approach, which undoubtedly has considerable potential towards the effort of achieving lasting peace as a long term initiative. In the case of the New Year celebration it was obvious that the joy of Avurudu (New Year) celebration was able to successfully bridge the ethnic differences through cultural commonalities.



Due to the importance of post war reconciliation at the ground level, SAPRI has been conducting workshops on "Building Religious Harmony" for the clergy, political leaders, community leaders, and others in Ratnapura District since 2013. Enthusiastic participants later organized their own activities targeting the grassroots level, using the knowledge gained from the workshops conducted by SAPRI.

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Students in Rakwana creating Harmony through Diversity

A celebration of Sinhala and Tamil New year by multi-religious students in Rakwana was yet another activity in the follow-up to SAPRI's 'Building Religious Harmony' programme. The event at Oxford International School, brought together approximately 200 students from Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and other ethnic groups in an effort to build unity through diversity. The event was organized by Ms. A. R. Begum, teacher of St. John's School, Rakwana, Mr. M.M. Mathloof, Principal of Oxford International School, Mr. K. Dharmasiri, Deputy Principal and the staff of the School.

The celebration commenced with a traditional welcome to the guests of honour. Boiling of milk in a new clay pot demonstrating an age-old tradition linked to prosperity took place thereafter and all those who were present were treated to festive delicacies representing both Sinhala and Tamil cultures, such as Kevum, Kokis, Sweet Appam, and Murukku.

Traditional, merry-making games and competitions for children took place thereafter. The mixed teams comprising children of all religions participated as opposing teams. The crowning of the New Year Prince and Princess was the highlight of the celebration. At the end of the day, both the children and adults appreciated the opportunity provided to cherish the company of persons from different ethnicities and religions.

The event reflects the capacity at the grassroots level in establishing co-existence among different ethnic groups by arranging small scale activities in the community. In addition, the event gave an exposure to the students of traditions, norms and customs of Sinhala and Tamil cultures, which was important, as awareness of other cultures is a way to build harmony through respecting diversity.

Events attended by SAPRI officials

- ❖ "Religious and Secular Fundamentalism in South Asia", a discussion organized by the Social Scientists' Association (SSA) on March 10, 2017. Ms. Zakia Soman (India), Dr. Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan (Bangladesh), Dr. Padma Prasad Khatiwada (Nepal) and Mr. Farooq Tariq (Pakistan) made presentations. SAPRI's Program Officers Aruni Samarakoon and Thanura Mendis participated.
- ❖ Launch of the "Report on Sri Lanka: State of Human Rights 2016", on 28th February 2017 at Law and Society Trust (LST) in Colombo. Ms. Dinushika Dissanayake, Executive Director of LST, Dr. Dinesha Samararatne, Senior Lecturer, Colombo University, Mr. Gehan Gunatilleke, Verite Research and Mr. Andi Schubert, Researcher, Social Scientists' Association were the panelists. SAPRI staff members Aruni Samarakoon and Nayana Ihalahewage attended.
- ❖ "Regional Young Women Leaders Dialogue", on 6th February 2017 at the Canada House. Women participants from Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Equitas and Equal Voice- Canada, jointed in the discussion. Program Officer Aruni Samarakoon represented SAPRI.

SAPRI talks of 'Building Religious Harmony' with SAF Governing Council

SAPRI was privileged to make a presentation to the Members of the Governing Council of South Asia Foundation (SAF), on its program on 'Building Religious Harmony', during the visit of the Council Members to Sri Lanka in January 2017, to participate in the annual Governing Council Meeting. The occasion was an event hosted by Madam Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga in her capacity as Chairperson of the Governing Council to present to the members of the Governing Council the activities undertaken on the ongoing reconciliation work in Sri Lanka.

Executive Director SAPRI was invited to present to the gathering, comprising the SAF Governing Council members and other eminent persons in Sri Lanka, the grassroots level activities being conducted by SAPRI to build religious harmony in the country. The programme was elaborated focusing on the seven districts targeted, i.e., Galle, Gampaha, Kalutara, Kegalle, Kurunegala, Puttalam and Ratnapura, where Capacity Building and Training of Trainers workshops were held.

The categories of participants in the workshops were referred to, such as the multi-religious clergy, political leaders, political activists, community leaders, government representatives, the private sector, the civil society and other stakeholders from the districts. The follow-up work was also explained and the manner in which the district coordinating committees and working committees are conducting activities on their own following the capacity building and training provided by SAPRI. The presentation was followed by a question and answer session. The Office of National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR) made Power Point presentations on the reconciliation work that the organization is conducting across the country.

Present on the occasion were SAF Governing Council members, Madam Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, Madam France Marquet, Madanjeet Singh (Foundation trustee), Amb. Veena Sikri from India, Dr. Nishchal N. Pandey from Nepal, Prof. Saleem Hashmi from Pakistan, Dr. Kamal Hossain from Bangladesh, Ms. Nim Dem from Bhutan, Prof. Omara Khan Masoudi from Afghanistan. UN Resident Coordinator, Sri Lanka, Ms. Una McCauley, Vice Chancellor of the University of Moratuwa, Prof. A. Jayawardane, Amb. Danesh Casie Chetty and Mr. M.S. Jayasinghe, ONUR Director General were also present.

SAPRI shares its CFLI experience with Canadian High Commissioner and other CFLI Partners

"Religious Freedom related initiatives are nothing new to the South Asia Policy and Research Institute (SAPRI), as we have been involved with Peace Building and Religious Tolerance efforts since 2013. As a means of addressing religious hostilities in the post war period SAPRI initiated an Interfaith Dialogue with the participation of leaders from all major religions, the civil society, and other stakeholders and followed up with interfaith dialogues at grassroots level", SAPRI's Program Officer Thanura Mendis said referring to the project on "Building Religious Harmony" SAPRI conducted with Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) assistance.

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The occasion was a roundtable discussion hosted by the High Commission of Canada in February, 2017 at the “Canada House” which was a follow-up on the projects carried out with CFLI collaboration. Participating organizations presented their experience in the conduct of their respective projects.

Besides SAPRI, the National Peace Council; Equal Ground; Sri Lanka Development Journalists’ Forum; Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities; Mines Advisory Group; Transparency Maldives; and Maldivian Democracy Network participated.

Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives assists the work of civil society organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations in focal areas including Religious Freedom, Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Democratic Governance and Security & Stability. SAPRI was an implementing partner of the programme in the year 2015/2016.

High Level Committee Meeting of the National Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition Leading to Zero Hunger

The High-Level Committee of the National Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition Leading to Zero Hunger met at the BMICH on 11th January 2017 to review the progress of the Strategic Review which commenced in September 2016. Lead Convener of the Review and Chair, SAPRI, Madam Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga presided over the meeting. The High-Level Committee had as its members, Ministers from line Ministries; and high-level representatives from the academia; civil society; and private sector.

Ministers Hon. Rajitha Senarathne, Hon. Ravi Karunanayake, Hon. Mahinda Amaraweera, Hon. Navin Dissanayake, Hon. S.B. Dissanayake, Hon. K.M.D. Chandrani Bandara, Hon. Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, and State Minister Hon. Niroshan Perera were present on this occasion. Mr. Kingsly Fernando, Senior Additional Secretary to the President, Senior officials Dr. Sunil Jayantha Nawaratne and Dr. Gerry Jayawardena also attended the meeting.

Mr Merrill J. Fernando, Chairperson, Dilmah Tea, Dr. Anila Dias Bandaranaike, Former Assistant Governor, Central Bank, Professor. K. Amirthalingam, University of Colombo, Ms. Una McCauley, UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. David Kaatrud Director, WFP Bangkok Office, Ms. Nina Brandstrup, FAO and Ms. Brenda Barton, Country Director, WFP were among the dignitaries present.

Addressing the High Level Committee, Madam Kumaratunga referred to the task force set up by the President of Sri Lanka to achieve the targets of food and nutrition security and poverty eradication in the country. She also focused on the importance of programs and action plans of the Ministry of Agriculture in reaching the state of *Zero Hunger* in the country.

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The meeting made a series of recommendations which included the setting up of an inter-Ministerial Committee for policy revision and rationalization; inclusion of Provincial Council bodies in the implementing process; adapting innovative and advanced technology for agriculture; and building a public- private partnership in marketing agro-products. The development of human resources including the youth particularly; social security and welfare measures for farmers; and using Education as a channel to popularize agriculture in young generation, were amongst the proposals made.



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