

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Colombo Conclave 2020: Inaugural National Conference**

The Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka, (INSSSL), the premier think tank on National Security functioning under the aegis of Ministry of Defence conducted its inaugural national conference 'Colombo Conclave 2020' under the theme "A Comprehensive Security Paradigm for Sri Lanka". The conference was held in a virtual platform at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2020. It brought 12 local scholars together to discuss thematic issues which played a dominant role in maintaining national security. At the outset Admiral Prof. Jayanath Colombage RSP, VSV, USP, rcds, psc the Director General of INSSSL welcomed the distinguished panelists and all those who attended virtually which was followed by an inspiring key note address by the Chief Guest Major General Kamal Gunaratne WWP RWP RSP USP ndc psc MPhil Secretary to the Ministry of Defence.

After displaying a short documentary of the institution, the webinar kicked off with its first sub theme moderated by Amb. HMGS Palihakkara, the former foreign secretary and former Governor of Northern Province under the theme of 'Redefining threats to National Security'. The speakers comprised of a team of security experts and narcotics Rear Admiral PDS Dias of the Sri Lanka Navy spoke on implementing methods to set parameters to protect the Maritime space and responding to eradicating and addressing all types of smuggling to the shores and terrorism driven by ethnic and religious extremism. He also reflected on our traditional scheme of operations in situations such as pandemics and bio-hazardous environments. Major General Darshana Hettiarachchi RSP VSV USP ndu psc Commissioner General of Rehabilitation and Head of the Office of National Action Plan for Countering and Preventing Radicalization, Violent Extremism, and Terrorism who was the second speaker for the first panel discussed on the collective measures taken to counter modern terrorism, highlighting the need to implement sophisticated policies, promoting interfaith dialogues between the ethnic races and how best to strengthen the overall unity among the society. Dr. Laknath Welagedra Chairman of the National Dangerous Drug Control Board spoke on the key issues affecting the people of Sri Lanka and especially the youth at hand and advised to strengthen measures to reduce the demand and supply of drugs internally and externally with the objective of achieving "a secure country free from drug abuse". He also proposed accelerated actions for strengthening coordination among law enforcement officers, other related agencies and with Indian Ocean countries with respect to conducting of intelligence-led joint investigations and implement joint coastal border control measures to promote and strengthen exchange of information and drug-related intelligence in timely manner among drug law enforcement agencies.

The second session was followed by a panel consisting of doctors and the Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture which was moderated by Amb. Bernard Goonetilleke, Chairman of the Pathfinder foundation & former Secretary to Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the sub theme, 'Recognizing sustainability for healthy medical discourse'.

Major General Sumedha Perera WWV RWP RSP USP Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture highlighted the need to create a vibrant and dynamic agriculture sector, achieving self-sufficiency, by introducing appropriate technologies and mechanisms for food security as it is vital to the national prosperity. Subsequently, Dr. Dilhani Samarasekara Consultant Community Physician Quarantine Unit, Ministry of Health and Dr. Lal Pananpitiya Deputy Director General Medical Services Ministry of Health discussed the impact of Preventive medicine and curative medicine on health Security respectively. The health specialist stressed on necessities on implementing preventive medicine focusing on protecting promoting and maintaining health and well-being, Emergency response operations, combating communicable and non-communicable disease.

The final sub theme was 'Eco-Responsibility towards a greener tomorrow' and the expert panel of environmentalists of this session was Dr. Terney Pradeep who discussed the importance of Blue economy, putting an end to the long drawn Illegal fishing issues faced by Sri Lanka, and measures taken to protect marine life by banning the use of dynamite. The next speaker Prof. Hemanthi Ranasinghe, Senior Professor of the Department of Forestry and Environment, University of Sri Jayewardenapura urged on the importance of participating in green initiatives, climate change adaptations, formulating a national plan to recover from disasters and preserving the biodiversity. Mr. Charith Pathirana, Scientific officer, Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board discussed on the environmental issues including natural resources (especially water), soil degradation and pollution that could be a cause of violent conflicts. He also stated that chemicals predominate these materials and human exposure is possible through raw materials, manufactured products, waste, combustion products or occupational exposure. The topics of discussion was of timely significance as the deliberations on health and food security gained widespread attention due to the current pandemic crisis and the facets on Environmental security examining the state of human-environment dynamics that is very much a hot topic in media today brought out the dual responsibilities of society and the government as a whole in protecting the environment. The maritime security aspects of the Indian ocean and the proliferation of drugs and narcotics by its littoral states making Sri Lanka not only a hub for drug dealers but a country that is fast catching up as a state that consumes dangerous drugs was alarming and the presentation on radicalization and violent extremism were also much pertinent topics that were discussed bringing out the importance of having a comprehensive security paradigm for Sri Lanka to safeguard its National Security. By organizing this inaugural; national conference which comprised of topics was a timely significance to Sri

Lanka, it paved way to facilitate knowledge sharing and multi-party discussions. This conference gave way to aid in early detection of security issues, prevention of possible conflicts as well as managing and mitigating existing conflicts among different parties.

This virtual conference was organized with the expectation of establishing a space for researchers, academia, former officials, and senior experts from around the country to engage in policy relevant, problem solving dialogues, carrying significance with respect to aspects of national security. The discussion helped to follow emerging health security, environmental security and maritime security trends together with Violent Extremism and Proliferation of Narcotic trends that are prevalent in the country. This conference achieved in helping participants to gain keener understanding of each other's perspectives on common issues. The conference provided a progressive platform for formulating options and solving problems