

Report of the President



As the President of the Institute of Environmental Professionals Sri Lanka, I am happy to write this report, to showcase the activities carried out by the IEPSL during the period April 2023 to March 2024.

Humanity is facing an existential threat. The interlinked and cascading effects of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution—the triple planetary crisis—are demanding a heavy toll on individuals, communities and threatening life on our planet. The triple planetary crisis is already exceeding the planetary boundaries. The world has already lost 8% of known animal species and 22% are at risk of extinction due to the destruction of their natural habitats and the introduction of invasive species. We are now losing biodiversity up to 10,000 times faster than it was disappearing 100 years ago. Declines in nature and biodiversity at the current trajectory will undermine the progress towards 35 out of 44 targets of the SDGs related to poverty, hunger, health, weather, cities, climates, oceans and land. In terms of change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that global warming is likely to reach 1.5 degrees Celsius between 2030 and 2052.

The people of Sri Lanka feel the impact of climate change every day. Sri Lanka, has constantly been placed among the top risk of extreme weather events by the Climate Risk Index annually released by German Watch. Although Sri Lanka's emissions are globally negligible, amounting to merely 0.03%, we, in our ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), have set targets for 2030 to achieve a 14.5% reduction of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, a 70% electricity generation through renewable sources, increasing forest cover to 32% and weaning off coal power by 2042, reaching net zero by 2050.

The Climate Prosperity Plan of Sri Lanka, launched at the Conference of Parties (COP) 27, of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) aims at rapid augmentation of nature-based solutions, including renewable energy. The Net Zero 2050 roadmap for Sri Lanka was launched at COP 28. Sri Lanka is in the process of renewing the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan to achieve the objectives of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Sri Lanka is one of the 36 global biodiversity hotspots. Sri Lanka has formulated the national policy on waste management, covering nine categories of general and hazardous waste. The national policy on chemical management was formulated to streamline chemical management in the country. Sri Lanka formulated the national policy on sustainable consumption and production in 2019. The Green Procurement Policy and the Green Labelling Framework will come into effect this year. A new Climate Change Act and a National Environment Act are being mooted to address the triple planetary crisis in the context of new knowledge and practices. The country is transitioning to a green economy. But there is a cost. The Climate Prosperity Plan, which spans from 2023 to 2042, will require 26.5 billion U.S. dollars. The implementation of the Net Zero 2050 roadmap will require over 100 billion U.S. dollars.

In the quest of building Sri Lanka's economic model based on competitiveness, digital transition, energy transition and the transformation to a green economy, the role of the environmental professional is paramount. Over the year under review, the Institute has striven to play its part.

Among the programmes that were conducted during the session were a one-day Field Program on Techniques in Ecology held on 22nd July 2023, two tailor-made Programmes on Evaluation of Environmental & Social Risk from Lending Facilities for the National Development Bank held in October and November 2023, a well attended 4-day Intensive Training Course on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) from 02nd to 08th November 2023, a half-day Workshop on Unlocking Green Investments held in February 2024 and a Half-day Workshop on Environmental Governance which was held virtually also in February 2024. Four 5-day Training Programmes on Environmental and Social Safeguards & Safety in the Construction Industry at the Local Authority Level are being arranged and will be held in March/April 2024.

In order to educate the public on prevalent environmental issues, and those that are aggravated by the economic crisis situation in the country, finding ways and means available for facing these challenges, whilst at the same time raising awareness about the IEP SL becomes important, A series of public webinars were held virtually on Plastic Pollution: It's time to take action, Green Skills for youth towards a sustainable world, Resilient Urban Economies: Cities as Drivers of Growth and Recovery and Dignity, freedom and justice for all. These drew a large participant base and were very interactive.

A new group of eight of our members obtained the Charter this year, after successfully completing the Professional Review, increasing the total number from 106 to 114. Rigorous action was taken throughout the year by the Secretariat to update the membership data base in order to regularize the current active membership list and publish it on the website. From the 800 or so registered members, unfortunately, many former members' names had to be archived, as their membership fees are in arrears, despite many reminders. The active member list of members of good standing is 315 currently.

This year too, in connection with the AGM, we decided to have a session with the members to review the activities of the past year, which was held on 12th March 2024. The keynote address was delivered by Dr Lalanath de Silva Attorney at Law, Managing Director, Transparentem & Panel Member, Independent Complaints Mechanism of the International Climate Initiative (IKI Germany). The Annual Technical Sessions and AGM this year are being held physically, and Ms Azusa Kubota, Resident Representative, UNDP Sri Lanka will grace the occasion as the Chief Guest at the inauguration of the Annual Sessions, while Vidya Jyoti Prof Emeritus Sarath W Kotagama, will be the Guest of Honour. The eight members who passed the Professional Review during the session 2023/24 will be awarded the Chartered Environmental Professional (CEnvP) Certificates.

The Annual Technical Sessions will discuss what green development means to Sri Lanka - traditional development with a green lens or a complete revamp of existing systems. Best practices and examples, benefits and implementation mechanisms will be debated looking at the importance of a green economy and circular economic principles to achieving greener development. The sessions will highlight inclusive green growth strategies, experiences, case studies and good practices and be open to presentations by academics, practitioners, policymakers, civil society, and the private sector, for collaborating in the development of knowledge and for strategic aligning of efforts. The sessions are expected to deliver latest findings on policies and practices that stimulate inclusive green growth, define future knowledge sharing and opportunities to promote inclusive green growth for collaborative action and identify priorities for action by stakeholders to pursue the most promising practices. The sessions will include:

- Improving the research ecosystem in Sri Lanka for data-driven decision-making in environmental conservation
- Knowledge Session on Green finance, sustainable financing for conservation, and nature-linked sovereign debt instruments
- Best Practice case studies on "Harmonising Nature and Development"

All the above activities were made possible due to the commitment of the Chairpersons of Standing Committees on Academic and Examinations - Past President Snr. Prof. Hemanthi Ranasinghe; Membership – Immediate Past President Eng. Prof. Niranjanie Ratnayake; Industrial Relations – Mr. Sanjeewa Chulakumara; Marketing and Communications – Assistant Editor Mr. Trishan Perera; Research and Publications – Editor, Dr. Sampath Wahala; Hony. Secretary Mr. Jayavilal Fernando, Hony Treasurer Mr. Randeewa Malalasooriya and the dedicated members of the Council and Standing Committees. I would be failing in my duty if I do not express my thanks to Ms Sithara Jayawardena and Ms Bhagya Jayasundera who worked tirelessly to keep the IEPSL Secretariat running smoothly.

I wish to place on record my appreciation of the excellent support extended to us by the Past Presidents, Council members, members and well-wishers of IEPSL and our sponsors for various activities in the past and hope that an even greater enthusiasm will continue in the future.

I request all our members to participate actively in the various discussions and calls for contributions of ideas and expertise as environmental professionals in various activities conducted by the Institute.

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**President
Institute of Environmental Professionals Sri Lanka**