



GREEN GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SRI LANKA: STATUS, CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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Green growth aims to foster economic growth and development, while ensuring that natural assets are used sustainably, and continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies upon. It is growth that is efficient in its use of natural resources, minimises pollution and environmental impacts and resilient for natural hazards. It emphasizes environmentally sustainable economic progress to foster low-emission, socially inclusive development, essential for dealing with climate change, and it is closely related to the notion of green economy aiming for improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. Sri Lanka faces a large number environmental concerns which can be categorized into global, regional and local. Impacts of global environmental issues such as climate change and ozone depletion are heavily felt. Among the main local environmental issues deforestation and forest degradation, water pollution, air pollution, improper waste disposal, decrease of environmental health, degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems can be identified which needs priority action. World trends as well as regional trends continue to influence Sri Lanka's prospects. The global community has made some progress in addressing poverty, but a mere continuation of current development strategies will not suffice to achieve sustainable development. Economic and social progress remains uneven, the global financial crisis has revealed the fragility of progress, and accelerating environmental degradation inflicts increasing challenges on societies – especially the poor. Environmental degradation has reached critical levels. Business as usual is therefore not an option, and sustainable development will require transformative change at the local, national and global levels, as recognized by the universal acceptance of the 17 SDG in 2015. However, it is admirable to note that the country has shown determination to overcome these debacles through policy/strategy formulation. With the vision to achieve sustained economic growth that is socially equitable, ecologically sound with peace and stability, the country prepared the National Sustainable Development Strategy. As an extended effort to this with special attention to climate change adaptation and mitigation, the country through the Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment recently promoted the Blue Green Development Strategy for the sustainable development. The country is also preparing its sustainable vision for 2030 integrating the most relevant goals among 17 SDGs of the United Nations. However, on the face of numerous challenges outlined above, specific policies and efforts are needed to ensure that green growth is inclusive and that environmental sustainability is not achieved at the expense of greater equity and poverty alleviation.

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