

**SPEECH OF HON.ANIL JAYANTHA FERNANADO, MINISTER OF  
LABOUR OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI  
LANKA AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 113<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF  
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE (ILC)**

**10<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

Mr. President,

Director-General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

It is both an honour and a privilege to address the 113<sup>th</sup> Session of the ILO Conference on behalf of the Government and the people of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

At the outset, I express my appreciation for the insightful and timely report presented by the Director-General which thoughtfully explores the nexus between jobs, rights and growth, along with challenges, and pathways to achieving social justice. In this spirit, Sri Lanka reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the founding values and objectives of the International labour organization.

Like other nations, Sri Lanka has faced profound challenges, over the past years ranging from the global pandemic to the intensifying effects of climate change.

In addition, we have contended with unique internal difficulties: corruption, economic mismanagement, unsustainable debt, policy inconsistencies, stagnation, declining government revenues, and a weakened external sector.

The people of Sri Lanka have given our government a clear mandate: to eliminate corruption, rebuild the economy, and lay a foundation for a just, inclusive and sustainable future. In this pursuit, we are slowly but steadily stabilizing our economy and working towards establishing a fair, equitable, and deepened democratic society.

A key focus of our national strategy is to attract and accelerate investment in priority sectors including agriculture, tourism, energy, ICT, logistics, mineral based industries and the green economy. At the same time, we are committed to human resource development, especially by empowering youth and women, and fostering multi-skilled, future-ready competencies.

Our labour policies are being aligned with the vision and standards of the ILO, reflecting international best practices and echoing the core themes of the Director-General's report.

Despite tight fiscal constraints, our government has taken decisive action to increase the basic salaries of public sector employees by 60–80% in the 2025 national budget. Concurrently, we amended the National Minimum Wage Act to ensure fairer remuneration in the private sector as well. Our long-term aim is to move beyond the concept of a minimum wage progressively towards a *living wage* for all.

We also recognize the need for broader public discourse and stakeholder engagement on how the benefits of technology—especially in terms of ownership, control, market power, and the information asymmetry—should be equitably shared within production relations.

**Sri Lanka** remains fully committed to strengthening labour laws to foster vibrant, conflict free and socially responsible production relations. Our focus includes promoting decent work, occupational safety and health, closing the gender pay gap, supporting the care economy, and ensuring protections for all workers, including those in the informal, precarious, and gig economies. We believe that everyone in

production systems should have an equal say in decision making rather than becoming a passive recipient of the outcome of decisions taken by a few.

To guide our reforms, we have expanded our tripartite model to include a broader spectrum of stakeholders. This inclusive approach is central to shaping our recovery and reform agenda. We continue to work closely with the ILO and other international partners to enhance institutional capacity and policy coherence.

We approach economic growth and its nexuses with jobs and rights from a broader perspective; one that is equitable, inclusive, and sustainable.

Let me take this opportunity to emphasize the critical role of international solidarity and cooperation. The global challenges we face—climate change, migration, technological disruption — require well-coordinated responses rooted in ethics, justice, and humanity.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Sri Lanka's steadfast support for the mission and mandate of the ILO. The call for "*Jobs, Rights, and Growth*" is not only relevant—it is urgent and a top priority.

Together, let us strive to build a future of work where no one is left behind irrespective of the nature, type and the place of work by upholding the labour supremacy.

Sri Lanka stands ready—with unwavering political will above all—to contribute to this noble and essential task.

Thank you.