

## **Nitrogen Challenges in Agri-food systems: Halve Nitrogen Waste by 2030**

*Webinar Organized by*

**Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)  
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

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### **Keynote Remarks**

*by*

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Ayubowan!

Dear Colleagues,

It is a privilege for me to address you as a Minister of Environment. All of us gathered here today are placed in the common platform for serving this planet. Saving this Planet from our own geoengineering misuse, greed and selfishness. It is our duty to handover this home in its purity to the lives of next centuries. It comes with a huge responsibility.

Is it possible for me to shoulder this responsibility alone? No, we must all join hands. Members of the UN family, members of civil society organizations and we all as members of this blue Planet family. Two arms of the UN, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme have proved today, that unity can offer something beyond individual attempt.

Nitrogen; to one it seems just another word from an encyclopedia. But when you get closer and have a more explanatory look at Nitrogen, like we did during the “Nitrogen for Life” event in Colombo last year, Nitrogen has multiple layers. Like a big tree having multiple layers, multiple functions and with roots everywhere, yet invisible, Nitrogen embodies every creature on this Planet in ways we are yet to identify.

Over the years, I have realized that the phenomenon which made us grieve in history are no exceptions from Nitrogen spy. The drug business, the fertilizer and seed monopoly, the weapons industry all stemmed from this one thing called Nitrogen. As my President, His Excellency Gotabhaya Rajapaksha, at the Biodiversity Summit of the seventy fifth United Nations General Assembly said, we must better manage nitrogen, ensuring the sustenance of humankind.

I am pleased to note the UNEP Working Group on Nitrogen, First International Nitrogen Assessment and the Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management all of which

contributing to cascade UNEA 4 resolution on sustainable nitrogen management through the science, policy and political regimes.

You may agree with me that waterways are like blood of this Planet. The faster water flows across the ground the lesser it infiltrates. Similarly, the ambition of halving nitrogen waste must be channelled gradually, strategically and with clear steps to the implementation and regulatory channels benefitting the life on this Planet. Agriculture is one key sector which can apply an iceberg effect towards our ambition.

In my country, we have relied for centuries on two major cropping seasons. These seasons were based on monsoon rains, solar radiation and the moon calendar where nature itself was the best nitrogen fertilizing agent. Unfortunately, the cropping calendar had been altered for last few decades. Nature's purity from soil to food had been degraded while polluting the Planet with synthetic Nitrogen overflows.

To reach halve Nitrogen waste ambition, I believe that there are two key strategies. One is to realign cropping seasons to the natural Nitrogen flux. The other is to increase fertilizer use efficiency during off cropping seasons. At a time when the world wastes more than 1 billion tonnes of food every year and in the light of UN Food Systems Summit 2021, may I invite two best UN arms, FAO and UNEP to explore the potential of mainstreaming these strategies to the global development agenda.

Before I conclude, let me appreciate the efforts of the organizers and scientists who support our efforts. I wish this forum a success.

Thank you!