

Environment Minister Naseer Ahamed advocates for H.E. the President's call on global Climate Justice

Environment Minister Naseer Ahamed, taking Sri Lanka's climate agenda to international platform urged that the countries in the global south such as Sri Lanka need climate justice and equity without further delay if they are to effectively counter the impact of climate change and to adopt meaningful mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Minister Ahamed shared these views when he addressed a special session on 'catalysing climate finance and investment' organised on the sidelines of the 79th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific (ESCAP) held in Bangkok, Thailand last week.

"The progress the world is making on a number of aspects of global climate change negotiations, including the loss and damage fund are characterized as slow-paced, lacking the highest level political will on the part of the real 'decision makers' and inadequate in terms of real term solutions. However, meanwhile the climate change 'bomb' keeps ticking, 1.5 degree Celsius is increasingly becoming unrealistic and climate crisis disasters are taking place in greater frequency and intensity across the world – almost once a week according to the Secretary General of the UN." Minister Ahamed said.

"The Climate Vulnerable countries, in the meantime are increasingly facing unprecedented challenges creating ripple effects across all sectors of their economies and all segments of their communities. Vulnerable countries are sliding down in their economic standards, social wellbeing and finally on the environmental sustainability. In more specific references to climate-induced disasters in Sri Lanka, the damages and losses caused by floods in May 2016 cost the country approximately US\$ 660 million, whereas the damages and losses caused by floods in May 2017 was estimated to be USD 478 Mn., with 212 deaths and 78 persons missing."

"Sri Lanka is subjected to such climate devastations with merely 0.05% emission of CO₂ with a per capita ratio of 0.88. On the other hand, Sri Lanka has historically pursued 'low-carbon' development and has one of the lowest per capita carbon emission rates for a lower-middle-income country. So, the reality is that low emission countries such as Sri Lanka have become the victims of world's largest emitters of Green House Gases such as China, United States, India, Russia, Japan and Germany respectively." Minister Ahamed said.

It is in that context, the countries in the Global South calls for global Climate Justice to be mainstreamed into the climate negotiation process based on citizens' calls for urgency, fairness, integrity and truth. It is a call on the countries with the greatest historical responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions to recognize their moral duty to act. Worldwide, people of faith are increasingly calling for climate justice because it is what our common humanity demands of them.

He further said that climate vulnerable developing countries need funds to address the climate crisis now. However, many global south countries are trapped repaying vast sums to their creditors every year, hampering their ability to respond to the mounting impacts and costs of the climate crisis. At the same time, extreme climate events and

insufficient grant-based climate finance are forcing indebted countries deeper into debt, keeping many locked in fossil fuel production, as the main source of income to guarantee debt service payment, and creating a vicious cycle that can be impossible to escape. What's more, climate finance itself continues to push vulnerable countries into debt as over 70% is provided as loans. Countries which have done the least to create the climate crisis are stuck paying the most.

Global south governments, civil society and even key global institutions like the World Bank and IMF have been highlighting the links between debt and the climate crisis, including at COP26, but this has not translated into adequate action by decision makers such as the G7 and G20.

Minister Ahamed emphasised that to address the climate crisis, urgent action is needed on the debt crisis in the global south. This includes debt relief and new, additional and adequate grant-based climate finance, in recognition of the climate debt owed to countries in the global south by wealthy polluting nations for their role in creating the climate crisis from colonialism to the present day. This finance is absolutely necessary to support vulnerable countries as they attempt to adapt to the impacts of climate change, address the Loss and Damage arising from such impacts that have gone beyond what can be adapted to, and manage the climate transition.

“Accordingly, taking H.E. the President Ranil Wickremasinghe’s vision and effort forward, Sri Lanka would propose to form the ‘Climate Justice Forum’ for climate vulnerable and developing countries with the objective of fast-tracking crucial aspects of climate negotiation, particularly the loss and damage funding and to provide alternative, out-of-the box approach, in the run up to the COP28 climate change summit in Nov./ Dec. 2023. In the search for greater climate justice and equity, Sri Lanka considers in particular, that ‘debt justice’ must be factored in, as an essential component in the overall package of solutions that should be made available for climate vulnerable nations for their mitigation and adaptation interventions.”, Minister Ahamed concluded.



Environment Minister Naseer Ahamed presenting Sri Lanka’s proposal to form ‘Climate Justice Forum’ for climate vulnerable developing countries when he met Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok, Thailand during the 79th session of the commission held from 15-19 May, 2023.