CONFERENCE REPORT

Ceylon Continental Hotel
Colombo, Sri Lanka.
24 – 25 January 2011
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SUMMARY

The National Green Jobs Conference “Green Jobs: the Way Forward”, organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the Ministries of Labour and Labour Relations and Productivity Promotion, was held during 24-25 January 2011 at the Ceylon Continental Hotel, Colombo. This National Conference was one of the key outputs of the Green Jobs project which is being implemented in Sri Lanka, with financial support from the Australian Government under the ILO-Australia partnership (2010-2015). The conference discussed ways of supporting environmentally, economic and socially sustainable enterprises and development, and the creation of more green jobs in the country. Over 100 participants, representing government departments and institutions, employers' and workers' organizations, private sector companies, NGOs, research institutes and media attended the conference. Key agenda items included the employment and labour market implications of environment-related measures, the potential for Green Jobs in Sri Lanka’s policy framework, the transition to more sustainable economic and social models, and technical sectoral presentations on renewable energy, waste management, eco-tourism and sustainable apparel manufacturing. The conference also saw the official launch of the Green Jobs project in Sri Lanka.

BACKGROUND

The ILO's Green Jobs Initiative supports a concerted effort by governments, employers, and trade unions to promote environmentally sustainable jobs and development and seeks to facilitate a "just transition" that reflects the environmental, economic and social pillars of sustainable development. The ILO through its regional office in Bangkok has selected Sri Lanka as one of five countries in the region to implement the Green Jobs in Asia Project, funded by the Australian Government. The objective of this project is to deepen ILO constituents’ understanding and commitment for the promotion of Green Jobs opportunities and just transition for workers and employers towards a low carbon, climate resilient, environmental friendly development in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has been active in the international arena in advocating the issue of climate change. Although the country is a negligible contributor to global warming, it is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. As living and coping with the impacts of climate change has become imperative, the Government of Sri Lanka has mapped out a series of actions to address the impacts of climate change. Engaging the Sri Lankan economy into an environmentally sustainable and low carbon development path could bring profound and lasting adjustments to the socio-economic structures of the country. The transformation into a sustainable and low-carbon development will trigger shifts in the labour markets, will create demand for new skills and re-skilling programs as well as specific measures to facilitate a just transition for workers, employers and enterprises, including social protection and financial schemes.

The effects of climate change and the resulting policies on the world of work are not always fully understood and in some cases considered a drain on the economy and competitiveness. Whereas in fact, most recent studies show that climate-smart policies can bring environmental, economic and social benefits together. The labour authorities and the social partners (ILO constituents) involvement in the development of inclusive and coherent climate policies are required. However, commitment at the highest political level will be required to ensure that environmental policy debates can address the gender and
social dimension more prominently and that job recovery policies can take a more environmentally sustainable path.

One of the outputs identified within the Green Jobs project was to convene a National Green Jobs conference with the aim of sharing knowledge on Green Jobs with relevant stakeholders. The key objectives of the National Green Jobs conference were to share experiences of Green Jobs in Sri Lanka as well as other countries with national stakeholders; identify skills requirements and existing government policies that could support the creation of new Green Jobs in the economy and to launch the Green Jobs project in Sri Lanka. The two-day conference was organized by the ILO Colombo office in close collaboration with the Ministries of Labour and Labour Relations and Productivity Promotion, with support from the Employers’ Federation of Ceylon and Trade Union partners.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS
Day 1: 24 January 2011

Day 1: Inaugural Session

The inaugural session of the National Green Jobs conference in Colombo Sri Lanka commenced with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp by the Chief Guest, the Minister for Labour and Labour Relations, Hon. Gamini Lokuge followed by other distinguished participants at the conference.

In his welcome address, Mr. Donglin Li, the ILO Country Director for Sri Lanka and the Maldives, welcomed all participants and acknowledged the support provided by the Ministries of Labour and Labour Relations and Productivity Promotion in organizing the conference. He explained that promoting Green Jobs was a priority area in ILO’s Decent Work Country Programme in Sri Lanka which highlighted ILO’s commitment to address environmental issues and global climate change. He also emphasized that the Green Jobs project would contribute to the country’s National Programmes and strategies on environment and climate change and would be in line with the Government’s key Policy document Mahinda Chinthana: Vision for the future Development Policy Framework.

The ILO Green Jobs Sri Lanka project was officially launched by the Minister of Labour and Labour Relations, Hon. Gamini Lokuge by signing a pledge of support for the promotion of Green Jobs in Sri Lanka. Key partners of the Green Jobs project also signed the pledge including senior representatives of Trade Unions, Director General of the Employers’ Federation of Ceylon, Secretaries and senior officers of the Ministries of Labour and Labour Relations and Ministry of Productivity Promotion, Senior officers of the Ministry of Environment, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Sri Lanka, the ILO Regional Director for Asia Pacific and the Country Director of ILO Colombo and senior officers of government departments and agencies.

Special remarks in support of the Green Jobs conference and the project were made by the following speakers: Mr. Leslie Devendra, General Secretary, Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya (on behalf of the Trade Unions); Mr. Ravi Peiris, Director General, Employers’ Federation of Ceylon (on behalf of the employers’) and Mr. Neil Buhne, United Nations Resident Coordinator/Resident Representative on behalf of the United Nations in Sri Lanka. Mr. Ravi Peiris mentioned that promoting Green Jobs for a sustainable future is not simply the responsibility of the government, but all those who were interested in the well being of society. He also stated that several employers in Sri Lanka are already spearheading green enterprises which would be showcased during the second day of the conference. Mr. Leslie Devendra, General Secretary, Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya, speaking on behalf of the Trade Unions stated that while the concept of Green Jobs was relatively new to Sri Lanka, the trade unions are actively involved in addressing environmental issues. Mentioning the environmental challenges facing Sri
Lanka today, especially in relation to natural disasters by way of floods due to global climate change, Mr. Neil Buhne expressed confidence that the Green Jobs project would gather momentum with the skilled labour force in the country. All speakers pledged their cooperation towards the implementation of Green Jobs in Sri Lanka.

Ms. Yamamoto, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, thanked the ILO constituents in Sri Lanka for their close collaboration in this important national conference and the government of Australia for its financial support in funding the Green Jobs in Asia project. She explained that the ILO Green Jobs Initiative being piloted in nine countries in the Asia and Pacific region, aimed to create a knowledge base on Green Jobs potential in each country, identify possible policy approaches, and demonstrate innovative measures for job creation and enterprise upgrading. She expressed confidence that the commitment at the policy level in Sri Lanka, matched by the support from employers and workers, will pave the way for the environmentally, economically and socially sustainable development that is envisaged for Sri Lanka.

The Chief Guest at the Green Jobs conference - Hon. Gamini Lokuge, Minister of Labour and Labour Relations stated that in all economic activities, environmental friendly jobs should be encouraged in order to promote a successful transition to a competitive, environmentally friendly, low carbon society. The Hon. Minister expressed his support to the Green Jobs initiative and mentioned that government, employers and employees --as key stakeholders, had an important role to play in the creation of Green Jobs in Sri Lanka. He further stated that the Green Jobs initiative was a timely initiative given the current environmental and energy challenges faced by the country.

Day 1: Technical Sessions

Following the inaugural session, three technical sessions were conducted on Day 1 of the Green Jobs national conference. The speakers provided insights on the conceptual framework of Green Jobs especially the ILO’s definition of Green Jobs and its achievements; shared experiences of Green Jobs initiatives in other countries (i.e. Bangladesh), and discussed Sri Lanka’s policy outlook in relation to environment and decent work. The sessions also discussed perspectives of ILO’s tripartite partners on the opportunities and challenges in implementing Green Jobs in Sri Lanka.

Technical Session 1: Green Jobs for a Sustainable Future

During Technical Session 1, presentations were made by Mr. Vincent Jugault, Senior Specialist of the ILO Regional Office for Asia Pacific on “Environment and Decent Work on Green Jobs: Employment and Decent Work in a climate-challenged world” and Dr.M.S.Islam, Head of International Co-operation and Development Department, Grameen Shakti, Bangladesh on “Green Jobs Initiatives in Bangladesh: the experiences of Grameen Shakti”. The session was chaired by Mr. D.L. Kumaradasa, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations.

Explaining the conceptual framework of Green Jobs, Mr. Jugault mentioned that Green Jobs was based on the two pillars of “decent work” and “environment sustainability”. Hence, two key challenges had to be faced – that of averting dangerous climate change and protecting life while creating jobs and decent work. Green Jobs reduce the environmental impact of enterprises and sectors, ultimately to levels that are sustainable. He mentioned that the Green Jobs initiative aimed at bridging the missing link between the environment, economy and the world of work. Mr. Jugault presented potential areas for Green Jobs creation in sectors such as waste management, agriculture, green buildings, tourism, forestry, manufacturing, fisheries, energy and transport. He also discussed the ILO framework for Green Jobs and achievements of the initiative in countries such as China and Bangladesh. Explaining that Green Jobs varied according to the country situation, he emphasized the need to define Green Jobs to suit the national context of each implementing country.
Providing an overview to Grameen Shakti, Dr. Islam mentioned that its mission is to empower rural people with access to green energy at an affordable cost as well as generate income opportunities in the renewable energy sector. Grameen Shakti operates in Bangladesh through an innovative micro-credit system, and social engineers are trained to work in rural areas. In providing sustainable clean energy in Bangladesh, Grameen Shakti has constructed biogas plants, improved cooking stoves and created more than 20,000 Green Jobs and trained rural women on renewable energy solutions. Solar Home Systems (SHS) have been installed in remote areas as well as in government buildings. Grameen Shakti provides flexible loans, after-sales service, adaptive research and training for users and technicians.


Technical Session 2 of Day 1 consisted of presentations by Mr. W.J.L.U.Wijayaweera, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations on the “Decent Work Policy Framework in Sri Lanka” and Ms. Padmini Batuwitage Additional Secretary (Environment and Policy), Ministry of Environment on “The National Action Plan for Haritha (Green) Lanka Programme: reflections on its employment dimensions”. The session was chaired by Dr. Ananda Mallawatantri, Team Leader, Environment Energy and Disaster Risk Management United Nations Development Programme, Sri Lanka.

Providing an insight into decent work policies in Sri Lanka, Mr. Wijayaweera discussed the National Plan for Decent Work in Sri Lanka which had been prepared with tripartite participation in 2006. The goal of decent work is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The key objectives of the policy are to give effect to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; operationalize the National Employment Policy and the National Productivity Policy in order to create better jobs; minimize the social cost of economic and legal reforms and to strengthen tripartite partners’ participation in the development and implementation of social and economic policies. Mr. Wijayaweera identified several key challenges in employment creation in Sri Lanka including the lack of employment opportunities for youth; gender issues; under-employment; exclusion of the informal sector and the poor quality of migrant work. Mr. Wijayaweera explained that the Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations is in the process of restructuring the Department of Labour especially with regard to enforcement and dispute settlement matters. He mentioned that labour law reforms were being implemented through a consultative process and a comprehensive employment database was being developed.

Discussing Sri Lanka’s environmental policies, Ms. Padmini Batuwitage stated that the Constitution of Sri Lanka made provision for the state to protect the environment for the benefit of the country and the people. It is also the duty of each Sri Lankan citizen to protect the environment. The National Environment Policy of Sri Lanka ensures sound environmental management within a sustainable framework, while the Parliamentary Committee on Environment provides the opportunity to resolve problems at all levels. The Haritha (Green) Lanka Action Plan, developed by the Ministry of Environment, promotes a green economy and identifies the need for knowledge creation for right choices which includes knowledge sharing, training and capacity building. She explained that although the country is a negligible contributor to global warming with a per-capita carbon emission of 0.6 tons per year compared to the global average of 4.6 tons, climate change is a serious issue in Sri Lanka. With the shrinking of Sri Lanka’s environmental space, she mentioned that it was necessary to urgently address social, environmental and economic problems in order to achieve sustainable development.

She also informed the conference of a new National Green Reporting system which was being established on a three tier basis as well as an awards system, in order to encourage enterprises. Developing a resource base for green human resources was identified as a priority for the country at national, regional and local levels.
Day 1: Technical Session 3: Promoting Green Jobs in Sri Lanka through Tripartism

Technical Session 3 was chaired by Mr. Kanishka Weerasinghe, Deputy Director General of the Employers’ Federation of Ceylon (EFC). The session consisted of presentations by Mr. N.G. Kularatne, Director General, National Institute of Labour Studies on “Skills for Green Jobs in Sri Lanka: prospects and challenges”; Mr. W.M. Bandusena, Secretary, Ministry of Productivity Promotion on “The Human Resource aspects of Green Jobs”; Ms. Thamali Senanayake, Senior Industrial Relations Advisor, Employers Federation of Ceylon on “Opportunities and challenges in the transition to a green economy: employers’ Perspectives” and “Trade unions’ perspectives on Green Jobs” by Mr. T.M.R. Rasseedin, General Secretary, National Association for Trade Union Research and Education (NATURE).

Mr. Kularatne defined Green Jobs as jobs in industries that would reduce consumption of energy and raw materials; avoid GHG emissions; protect and restore ecosystems and minimize waste and pollution. Potential industries for the creation of new Green Jobs were identified in several sectors, e.g. renewable energy (wind, solar, biomass, geothermal) green buildings; fuel efficient vehicles; public transport; waste management; sustainable agriculture and green financial mechanisms. Mr. Kularatne also identified several emerging green professions requiring qualifications at university level such as environmental architects; geotechnical engineers; agronomists; water and waste treatment engineers; compliance managers; power grid integration managers; energy efficiency inspectors and carbon auditors that would be needed in the green economy. He also identified several important green occupations which required short term competency based training such as organic farmers; farm product purchasers; recycling coordinators; carbon traders; eco tour guides and park rangers. Mr. Kularatne emphasized that multiple stakeholders should initiate action on skills development for Green Jobs in Sri Lanka, including the government, local government authorities, university training institutions, Ministry of Education, business establishments and the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau (for overseas employment on Green Jobs).

Mr. Bandusena stated that several pre-conditions needed to be met in order for the workforce to be considered “green” which included increasing their “ecological intelligence” as well as changing their internal and external behaviour patterns. He mentioned that Human Resources should act proactively towards the creation and coordination of green job opportunities within organizations. Identifying some of the human resource perspectives of Green Jobs, Mr. Bandusena said that it was necessary to quantify the number of Green Jobs already created; identify the number of jobs to be created in the future; where the jobs would be created; who would have access to them and whether developing countries could benefit from the new Green Jobs as much as industrialized nations.

Speaking of the employers’ perspectives of Green Jobs, Ms. Thamali Senanayake mentioned that a just transition to a green economy required a paradigm shift that needed to be managed carefully, taking the interests of all stakeholders while ensuring relevance to the country’s social and environmental background. Clean technologies, renewable energy, waste management, sustainable cities, energy efficient buildings and transport were identified as some of the new engines for economic growth. She mentioned that investing in these sectors could be the way forward to contribute to sustained economic growth over the long term with positive contributions to decent job creation and poverty reduction. Hence, businesses needed to analyze the investments made by existing green enterprises in the country and the region and estimate their effects on generating Green Jobs. Case studies of green success stories also needed to be documented and disseminated to show the progress of Green Jobs. Since workplaces in the emitting sector and other service sectors would be affected by new Green Jobs that would replace old jobs, education, awareness and attitudinal change were important during the transition. The workforce had to be trained in new efficient work practices and encouraged into a culture of sustainability. Although there were many policies on sustainable development, there was room to further strengthen them. Public policies offering incentives and favouring environmentally clean technologies such as renewable energy, recycling had to be given due consideration. Providing financial incentives to new green technologies such as tax exemptions will also facilitate the transition.
Discussing the Trade Union’s perspectives on Green Jobs, Mr. Rasseedin mentioned that the present competitive global economy seeks to advance economic interests with scant thought for its consequences, especially regarding the adverse impact on the environment. He mentioned that as the consequences of global warming and climate change are apparent, collective solutions are needed. Therefore, Trade unions needed to adopt a positive approach and address the question of moving into Green Jobs without compromising fundamental rights at work. In order to achieve this, he mentioned that the ILO’s labour standards and conventions were important and relevant, such as Convention 148 concerning the protection of workers against occupational hazards in the working environment due to air pollution, noise and vibration; Convention 170, which primarily addresses the safe handling and disposal of harmful chemicals and Convention 174 which aims to protect workers, public and the environment from major industrial accidents particularly involving hazardous substances. Mr. Rasseedin emphasized that workers and trade unions were an integral part of society and that each individual had a right to participate in the decision making process. He encouraged an inclusive process of consultation to meet future challenges and the adoption of a rights based approach.
Two technical sessions were conducted during Day 2 of the Green Jobs National Conference, highlighting Sri Lanka’s contributions towards environmentally sustainable enterprises and employment. The aim of these sessions was to showcase good practices from the private sector and civil society and to discuss government policy on sectors for green job creation such as waste management, and eco tourism. The technical sector presentations were on the subjects of sustainable apparel manufacturing, sustainable tourism, waste management, recycling and renewable energy.

Following the technical sector presentations, the final concluding session of the conference was held to obtain feedback from the ILO constituents and conference participants on their key observations and lessons learned and to discuss the way forward for the implementation of Green Jobs in Sri Lanka.

Day 2: Technical Session 4: Green Jobs Perspectives in Key Sectors

Technical Session 4 consisted of presentations by three speakers: Mr. Iresha Somarathna, Group Head - Energy and Environment, Brandix Apparel Ltd on Sustainable manufacturing in Sri Lanka; Dr. Nalaka Godahewa, Chairman of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority on “Sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka: policy perspectives and employment opportunities”; and Mr. Ravi De Silva Consultant, Social and Environmental Management, Aitken Spence PLC on the “Kandalama Experience and its employment dimensions”. The session was chaired by Mr. Leslie Devendra, General Secretary of the Trade Union -- Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya (SLNSS).

Mr. Somarathna shared the success story of greening Sri Lanka’s largest apparel exporter, Brandix Lanka Private Limited. Brandix, with an annual turnover exceeding USD 400 million, employs over 30,000 associates while generating indirect employment opportunities. The organization has over 30 manufacturing facilities in Sri Lanka and strategically located international sourcing offices. Brandix has changed its business strategy to low carbon manufacturing in order to reduce carbon emissions, conserve the environment and natural resources and to work towards a green apparel sector which would result in better business propositions in the future. The company operates within the framework of three environment pledges, namely to reduce its carbon footprint by 30%; water footprint by 30% and to achieve zero waste to landfill through solid waste management by the year 2012. Brandix has achieved a significant milestone with the establishment of its Green Factory in Seeduwa – which became the first apparel manufacturing facility in the world to be rated Platinum under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System of the US Green Building Council. The 130,000 square-foot Brandix Eco Centre, Brandix Casualwear's lead manufacturing plant for the global giant Marks & Spencer, had achieved a score of 76 on the 85-point LEED certification system, setting a global benchmark for low energy consumption, water conservation, solid waste management and low carbon emissions. The plant, which has been converted into an Eco Centre at a cost of USD 3 million, has achieved a reduction of carbon emissions by 80%, an energy saving of 46%, a reduction of water consumption of 70% and zero solid waste to landfill.

In addition to its path breaking green factory buildings, Brandix also conducts educational and awareness raising programmes on environmental conservation amongst its employees. These initiatives include tree planting campaigns, nature training in selected locations; spring cleaning days; poster campaigns; green quizzes, earth hour and car pooling to reduce carbon emissions.

Dr. Godahewa stated that tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka had grown by 46% in 2010. He mentioned that Sri Lanka has become a preferred tourist destination since the end of the 30 year civil war. He emphasized that the country was a green tourist destination which was a preferred choice for many visitors due to its
authenticity, compactness and diversity. Presenting the Sri Lanka government’s tourism development strategy, Dr. Godahewa stated that Sri Lanka will be promoted under eight key product categories: beaches; heritage; scenic beauty; wild life; festivals; bliss (wellness) and the essence of its people.

With regard to the government’s Tourism Policy, Dr. Godahewa discussed several key areas – such as infrastructure development, awareness raising, promotion of international tourism through Sri Lanka’s foreign missions, through tour operators and opinion leaders and the promotion of domestic tourism using existing infrastructure and services such as rest houses. He mentioned that a unified approach will be adopted by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) by working in collaboration with relevant agencies such as the Export Development Board, Tea Board, and the Board of Investment. He stated that sustainability would be achieved by protecting the environment through awareness creation, and by ensuring that the benefits were not limited to a few individuals or companies, but reached all strata of society. He mentioned that the tourism sector would be encouraged to work with communities to ensure their active participation, and to develop products and services at ground level in order to benefit small and medium entrepreneurs. A ‘home stay’ concept for tourists is also being promoted by the SLTDA, which would provide direct benefits to local communities.

Sharing the success story of Kandalama Hotel, Mr. Ravi De Silva said that it was a classic example of sustainable development in Sri Lanka. The hotel had been designed and developed in a fragile environment amidst protests from environmentalists and the local communities who initially had reservations about its impact on the unique biological diversity of the area. However, the developers acknowledging these concerns had worked in close collaboration with the communities, which led to the design and construction of one of the most environmentally friendly hotels in Sri Lanka.

The Kandalama Hotel has won the Green Globe award in three consecutive years -- 1996-1998 as well as several other prestigious travel sector awards. Employees of Kandalama, many from the local villages, are encouraged to develop and share new conservation ideas with the management. A sound environmental ethic is fostered through the “Eco Park” concept -- an area that acts as an environmental education centre for employees and guests. The park, which has been constructed by employees using local materials, includes a compost pit, tree nursery, wastewater treatment plant, and an eco-library.

Mr. De Silva mentioned that energy efficiency, conservation and management of fresh water, waste minimization, air and sound pollution prevention, ecosystem conservation, social and cultural development were key factors that had transformed Kandalama into an eco-friendly hotel. The hotel uses renewable energy sources such as bio gas, and bio mass for certain activities and restricts the use of water through innovative methods such as low flush toilets. The hotel also gives priority to the conservation of trees. Some of the green employment opportunities generated at the Kandalama hotel include: naturalists; bird watching guides; nature guides; environmental animators, biomass operators; eco technicians – for renewable energy maintenance and bio horticulturists.

**Day 2: Technical Session 5: Green Jobs Perspectives in Key Sectors**

Technical session Five placed emphasis on two important sectors in Sri Lanka: waste management and renewable energy. The session, chaired by Ms. Pearl Weerasinghe, Commissioner General, Department of Labour, consisted of presentations by Mr. Charitha Herath, Chairman, Central Environmental Authority on National Solid Waste Management Strategy and its employment dimensions; Green Jobs and clean jobs in waste management and recycling by Dr. Ajantha Perera, Founder, National Program on Recycling and Solid Waste in Sri Lanka and “Clean Energy for Sustainable Livelihoods” by Mr. Ranga Pallawala, Team Leader, Infrastructure Services Programme, Practical Action, Sri Lanka.

Discussing the National Solid Waste Management Strategy, Mr. Charitha Herath, stated that solid waste management was a major environmental problem in Sri Lanka. He explained that while waste disposal is
the responsibility of local authorities, the Central Environmental Authority and the Ministry of Environment is implementing a National Waste Management Programme to find a solution to the problem of solid waste management. Mr. Herath discussed the national solid waste management policy and the national strategy which were the key policy documents on solid waste management in Sri Lanka. The strategy was based on the “3R” principle, to reduce, reuse and recycle. With regard to employment opportunities in the waste management sector, Mr. Herath mentioned that jobs would be generated in sectors such as eco-friendly packaging industries, recycling of paper, glass and plastics and composting industries and land filling.

Dr. Ajantha Perera shared her experiences in waste management initiatives in Sri Lanka, with emphasis on the informal sector. She explained that informal sector waste collectors, who mainly operated in the waste dump sites in urban areas, had no ethnic or religious divisions. Their main livelihood consisted of collecting recyclable material such as paper, glass and plastic, which were subsequently re-sold. These workers were a good example of how solid waste could be sustainably managed and also demonstrated the value in solid waste. Discussing the occupational health and safety issues faced by workers in SWM, Dr. Perera mentioned some of the initiatives that had been operationalized to improve the working conditions of waste collectors, e.g. provision of wash room facilities at waste dump sites, hand carts to female workers for waste collection from households and the provision of boots, gloves and first aid to minimize occupational health and safety problems. Dr. Perera hoped that the livelihoods of the waste collectors would be uplifted by converting them into “Green Jobs” through the incorporation of decent work aspects.

Providing an introduction to Practical Action, Mr. Pallawala mentioned that the organization followed its founder’s philosophy of reducing poverty using appropriate technology. He emphasized that a green environment required cleaner energy sources such as solar power, hydro power, wind energy and bio energy. However, to make the transition to renewable energy options, policies had to be in place at international, national and local levels. Awareness of the benefits that can be derived by shifting to alternative energy was also considered important. People with skills and expertise were needed in the renewable energy sector such as designers, engineers, planners, technicians as well as ground level workers. There was also a need for financial assistance for industries to shift to renewable energy options. He also mentioned that National Poverty Reduction Programmes such as “Samurdhi” and “Api wawamuru rata nagamu” could include renewable energy options and vocational training aspects in order to create new Green Jobs. He explained that greening the energy services sector would mean greening the entire value chain, which would in turn provide opportunities to the bottom strata of society and thereby uplift people’s quality of life.

Day 2: Final Session and Concluding Remarks

The final session of the National Green Jobs Conference was held to obtain feedback on the key lessons learned as well as the participants’ observations and to identify key recommendations and the way forward for the implementation of the Green Jobs project in Sri Lanka. Ms. Padmini Batuwitage, Additional Secretary (Environment and Policy) Ministry of Environment chaired the session. Feedback on the conference was provided by the following ILO constituents: Ms. Thamali Senanayake, Senior Industrial Relations Advisor on behalf of the Employers Federation of Ceylon (EFC), Mr. Harry Sandrasekera, Vice President, Ceylon Workers’ Congress on behalf of the trade unions and Mr. W. Wimalaweera, Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka. Mr. Vincent Jugault, Senior Specialist on Environment and Decent Work, ILO Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, provided the concluding remarks on behalf if the ILO.

Providing feedback on behalf of the employers, Ms. Thamali Senanayake said that the conference was an informative knowledge sharing experience. Identifying sectors where Green Jobs could be implemented in Sri Lanka, Ms. Senanayake recommended solid waste management as a priority area for intervention
by the Green Jobs project—especially given the linkages of SWM to child labour and decent work. Her recommendations for future interventions of the Green Jobs project included the formation of a steering committee representing agencies/institutes that participated at the conference, and a road map for stakeholders to identify priorities and timelines. She also mentioned the necessity to refocus finances on priority areas. Speaking of the importance of skills development and knowledge sharing, she mentioned the need to include Green Jobs in vocational training and higher university curricular; and to develop a knowledge base on Green Jobs policies and existing green initiatives. She assured the forum that EFC was committed towards supporting Green Jobs in Sri Lanka. As a preliminary effort, the EFC will be undertaking a mapping study to identify existing green initiatives within its membership. Another area of possible intervention was the formulation of Green Jobs policy guidelines for businesses.

Mr. Harry Sandrasekera of the Ceylon Workers Congress said that the plantation industry in Sri Lanka has been supportive of environmental conservation which was demonstrated by numerous eco-friendly practices in the industry such as the use of biomass energy and organic agricultural methods. He said that the subject of Green Jobs and its promotion was beyond controversy and was an area that needed to be given high priority. Mr. Sandrasekera assured cooperation of the trade unions towards the Green Jobs project. He emphasized the major role the government of Sri Lanka had to play to bring the concept of Green Jobs into reality and the key role that ILO had to play in bringing together all constituents in the design and implementation of green initiatives. Mentioning possible problems in integrating informal sector workers, Mr. Sandrasekera hoped that the government would be committed to bringing the informal sector workers into the mainstream of trade union activity. He also encouraged greater participation of ILO’s tripartite partners in implementing Green Jobs in the country.

Speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations, Mr. Wimalaweera thanked the ILO for organizing the national conference which was a timely event given the current environmental challenges faced by the country. He mentioned that the government, employers and workers have an equally important role to play in moving to a green economy. He recommended that the concept of Green Jobs needed to be expanded through research and development and that employers and workers should work in harmony with the government, focusing on priority issues. He assured the support of the Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations to all other line ministries such as the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Industries and other partners to work collectively to achieve a clean and productive environment.

The Chair, Ms. Batuwitage, mentioned that Sri Lanka had the necessary environmental policies and strategies in place that could facilitate a transition to a greener economy. She further stated that Green Jobs are not simply related to high technology as examples of Green Jobs could be found in labour intensive sectors such as waste management in Sri Lanka. However, it was necessary to build the capacity of workers in such sectors in order to ensure decent work aspects were incorporated into environmentally friendly occupations, especially to ensure the health and safety of workers. She mentioned that if environmental concerns are adequately integrated into the daily lives of all workers, many workers would be engaged in Green Jobs. She concluded that employees should be encouraged to focus on the productivity of their organizations and that trade unions could help build the capacity and skills of the workers.

Providing concluding remarks on behalf of the ILO, Mr. Vincent Jugault mentioned that there was a general consensus at the national conference that the concept of Green Jobs should be promoted in Sri Lanka as it was a priority area in terms of the country’s current needs and national policies. He was pleased to note the mutual interest amongst ILO’s constituents and partners in working together to implement Green Jobs in Sri Lanka. He mentioned that many countries in the Asian region had already included Green Jobs in their development frameworks and many green initiatives were under implementation. He acknowledged the need to develop an action plan with multi-stakeholder participation and stressed that existing mechanisms could be used under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Labour Relations in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and social partners to incorporate
Green Jobs into the development agenda of Sri Lanka. Officially concluding the conference, Mr. Jugault thanked all participants for their valuable contributions.

ANNEXES

National Green Jobs conference presentations, agenda, participant list and press release can be viewed and downloaded from the ILO Colombo website:

Conference Presentations
http://www.ilo.org/colombo/whatwedo/events/lang--en/docName--WCMS_150268/ntrPg--1/index.htm#1