

**15th Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) Telecommunication and ICT
Development Forum (ADF -15)**

Inaugural Address

11th June 2018 at 9.30 am

Ayubovan

Good morning,

President H.E Maithripala Sirisena

Secretary General of APT

Chairman, ADF

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to deliver the Inaugural Address at this very important event and to welcome you on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka and TRCSL. We warmly welcome you to the 15th APT Telecommunication and ICT Development Forum. Your Excellency, I welcome you first and appreciate your presence in the midst of your busy schedule. I welcome all distinguished representatives and participants as well.

Sri Lanka has been a longstanding member of the APT and we have hosted several APT programs, but, this is the first time we host an APT Telecommunication and ICT Development Forum. We are indeed happy to host this event in Colombo and thank the APT for giving us this opportunity. We appreciate very much the effort of the APT in organizing the meetings, seminars, workshops and forums on emerging issues in the field of telecommunication and ICT. That has immensely benefitted us as well as other member states and organizations.

This forum brings together telecommunications and ICT policy makers, regulators and other relevant officials from the region to a common platform, which is very crucial for economic development. For instance, as a country that is interested in attracting Foreign Direct investments, if the telecommunication and ICT sectors are not at its elevated heights, very pertinent issues such as search of finances, markets, timely delivery, transport, operating forward and backward linkages, efficient banking and insurance facilitations etc. will fall behind. These are the areas where we are well behind our competitors. Failure in perfection in these will create unnecessary economic and social issues that will bring turmoil. Therefore, I perceive the role of APT and the ADF as becoming increasingly important in the fast changing world of ICT that we live in. New ICT trends are fast emerging and have influenced our lives, so much so that the way we live, think, work, study, travel and our businesses and economies have to be adapted in order to move along and develop and benefit from this change. In addition to adapting adoption of new technologies also become extraordinarily important. These fora will help us update our knowledge on these developments and gain practical insight from experiences shared.

I firmly believe this is a golden opportunity afforded to us to strengthen and develop not only our knowledge relating to telecommunication and ICT but also the economic, social and cultural ties amongst nations in the region. Sharing knowledge innovations and experiences unique to nations will benefit all the member nations in the APT and could thereby be utilized to improve the quality of life of our people, in our own ways in light of our unique circumstances.

The Conference Agenda focuses mainly on connectivity and Innovation. Telecommunication and ICT have been the modes of connectivity that could facilitate the needs I expressed earlier. In Sri Lanka the regulator has initiated

programs focusing on these areas. A series of training programs were conducted to promote innovation and educate entrepreneurs, SMEs and school leavers of the potential and opportunities available to them in the field of ICT. A project “ Gamata Sannivedanaya” or ICT facilities for the villages to identify underserved and unserved areas for broadband services is being carried out to extend access to these areas through the operators. While we share these experiences we wish to learn from similar experiences of those who participate in this event.

I wish you very fruitful and useful deliberations and interactive sharing of experiences during the next few days as you discuss many of these challenging and pertinent issues. Once again, thank you for giving TRCSL the honor of hosting this event and especially to the APT for executing their tasks in a dynamic and admirable manner.

May I also wish all international delegates a very pleasant and enjoyable stay in Sri Lanka. I hope you would enjoy the hospitality, history and culture of our country even in little doses as time permit to do so.

Thank you very much.