



## **Message of the Chairman on International Human Rights Day 2024**

On this International Human Rights Day, we celebrate the 76th anniversary of the milestone achievement of adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It calls for a moment of reflection; to acknowledge and recognize the significant developments the declaration has paved way for, to protect and promote the universal rights of all persons while attention is also drawn towards the many challenges that hinders the full realization of the rights and values enshrined in the declaration. Among the numerous challenges, special attention is drawn to the global pandemic and the political and economic instability that unfolded in the country, which has left behind long term and ongoing setbacks. Those challenges brought to surface the systemic inequalities that were prevalent over the years and also exacerbated injustices faced by many, in particular persons belonging to vulnerable communities.

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, reflecting on the work that has been done over the years, places extra emphasis going forward to address such systemic inequalities and create an equitable environment, where all persons are able to fully realize the rights and values envisioned in the UDHR.

On the 10th of December 2024, the Commission, in commemoration of the International Human Rights Day under the theme ‘Our Rights, Our Future, Right Now, which emphasizes the urgency of addressing human rights challenges while shaping a sustainable and inclusive future.

Sri Lanka stands at a pivotal moment. As we navigate the complexities of post – conflict recovery, economic stabilization, and reconciliation, we must prioritize the rights of every individual, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, religion or socioeconomic status. Our future as a nation depends on the empowerment of our citizens through access to education, healthcare, justice and equal opportunities. The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) continues to champion the rights of the vulnerable and marginalized from safeguarding the rights of them to promoting accountability for past injustices, we persons to ensure that human rights are not just aspiration but actionable aspect by all concerned.

On this day, I call upon all sectors – government, civil society, and individuals – to be vigorously committed to building a society where human rights are protected and respected. Let us remember that the protection of rights today helps secure the foundation of peace and prosperity for future generations. Our Rights are Our Future, and that future begins with actions we taken Right Now. Let us unite in this endeavour, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Accordingly, the Commission will launch its ‘Guidelines for Public Administration circular 22/88 related to public employment of Person with disability’, The status of “Manpower” workers: a study of the Katunayake and Biyagama free trade zone, ‘3 landmark recommendations given by HRCSL’ and ‘Final General Guidelines and Recommendations on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders Guideline’.

On this day, while I call upon the State and all other relevant authorities, to uphold the fundamental and international human rights obligations of the State, I also call upon all individuals and organizations to take proactive steps to educate and enhance the knowledge of the general public on the rights that have been guaranteed by the Constitution and other legislations initiated in this regard.

In conclusion let me assure you on this day, that the HRCSL as the key oversight body with the responsibility to protect and promote human rights in Sri Lanka, will in its fullest capacity dispense mandated duties and responsibilities to ensure the rights of all persons, leaving no one behind.

Justice L.T.B.Dehiddeniya  
Chairman  
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

10.12.2024