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இலங்கை மனித உரிமைகள் ஆணைக்குழு
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Chairman’s Message – International Women’s Day 2025

International Women’s Day, which falls annually on 08th of March, recognizes the incredible achievements of women across the world, their contributions to the society, their resilience in the face of challenges, and their unwavering fight for equality. However, despite the progress made, gender inequality remains a harsh reality for many women and girls. Many still face discrimination, violence, unequal opportunities and lack of legal protection. They are often denied their fundamental rights to education, economic independence and personal security. This year’s theme, “For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment” speaks on the urgency of ensuring that every woman regardless of her background, economic status or social identity, has access to her rights, equal opportunities and the ability to live a dignified life.

Sri Lanka has made significant strides in advancing women’s rights, but challenges remain. Women make up nearly 52% of the population, yet they are underrepresented in leadership, disproportionately affected by poverty, and face alarming levels of gender-based violence. Women face systematic discriminations in the workplace including wage disparity and fewer leadership opportunities and also suffer from widespread gender-based violence, with many survivors facing significant obstacles in accessing justice. Additionally, when it comes to legal protections, although Sri Lanka has introduced laws aimed at safeguarding women, the lack of adequate support leaves many vulnerable, making it a major challenge.

As we commemorate International Women’s Day, it is crucial to recognize the ongoing challenges women face and explore effective steps to address them. In the recent parallel report to the committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) highlighted key interventions to protect and promote women’s rights. The HRCSL emphasized the state’s responsibility to combat violence and ensure a safe space for women in all spheres. These efforts reflect a firm commitment to creating an inclusive and just society where women can fully participate without fear or limitations.

On this special day, HRCSL reaffirms its commitment to addressing the persistent legal inequalities and social injustices that hinder women from fully realizing their rights. This year, our focus is on fostering meaningful dialogue on the challenges women face due to gaps in the legislative framework. By identifying policy vacuums and systemic barriers, we strive to develop

concrete legal, policy, and administrative recommendations to the state and relevant stakeholders. However, advocacy and discussion alone are not sufficient, they require decisive legislative, policy, and institutional reforms. It is only through such transformative action that we can ensure women's full and equal participation in political, economic, and social life. Let this Women's Day be a call to action for a better future where every woman's rights are fully recognized and protected.

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

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