



## Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, Geneva

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### High Level Delegation Visits WEF as follow-up to Davos

Following the participation of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and delegation at the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos in January, a Sri Lankan delegation consisting of senior government officials and representatives from the private sector engaged in a two-day follow-up meeting at the World Economic Forum's headquarters in Geneva. Coordinated by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN in Geneva, the visit was aimed at strengthening the engagement between Sri Lanka and the WEF and to identify specific areas of engagement. The WEF, is the world leading "platform" that brings global political leaders, private sector leaders and thought leaders together to engage, discuss and deliberate and learn from each other.

During their visit on 21-22 March, the Sri Lanka delegation met Professor Klaus Schwab, Chairman of the World Economic Forum and several Managing Directors and senior teams representing different initiatives of the international organization. Coming two months after Sri Lanka's participation in Davos, this visit highlighted the strong commitment of both the Sri Lanka government and the WEF to forge a new chapter in cooperation and collaboration between the two parties. The discussions centered on engagement by Sri Lanka across several areas of the WEF initiatives: Economic Growth and Social Inclusion, International Trade and Investment, Agriculture and Food Security, Future of Production Systems and the Future of Internet.

In introductory remarks, Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha emphasized the importance of availing of the present momentum in collaboration with the WEF to ensure tangible benefits to Sri Lanka. While focusing on concrete next steps in the already identified areas, he also encouraged seeking out other areas where there was considerable scope for public-private sector partnership, such as in developing the resurgent tourism industry, where the extensive network and best practices available in various WEF platforms could benefit Sri Lanka.

The delegation from Sri Lanka led by Mr. Mangala Yapa, Managing Director (Designate), Agency for Development, Ministry of Development Strategies & International Trade, included Mrs. Sonali Wijeratne, Director General of the Department of Commerce, Dr. Rohan Wijekoon, Director General of the Department of Agriculture, Mr. Asitha Seneviratne, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Dr. Ajith Madurapperuma, Member of the Board of the ICT Agency, and Mr. Anushka Wijesinha, Chief Economist of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the WTO Ambassador R. D. S. Kumararatne, Sri Lanka's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Mrs. Samantha Jayasuriya and Second Secretary Mrs. Mafusa Lafir, were also associated in the meetings.

During the meetings at the WEF, the Sri Lanka delegation also discussed opportunities for Sri Lankan government agencies as well as Sri Lankan companies to engage in future WEF initiatives, and the specific next steps currently being planned. The World Economic Forum has already invited several policymakers from Sri Lanka to attend the 25th World Economic Forum on ASEAN taking place in Kuala Lumpur on 1-2 June and the Annual Meeting of the New Champions, which will be held this year in Tianjin, People's Republic of China on 26-28 June.

During their stay in Geneva the Sri Lankan delegation also held discussions with senior officials and programme managers of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and UN Institute for Research and Training (UNITAR), to explore potential areas for cooperation. At WIPO, meeting with a team led by Mr. Mario Matus, Deputy Director General/Development Sector, the delegation focused on the importance of using Intellectual Property (IP) as a tool for development. The need to evolve a coherent IP Strategy for Sri Lanka and integrating IP into innovation policy formulation in Sri Lanka by involving a wider base of stakeholders was emphasized. At UNITAR, meeting with a team led by Mr. Alex Mejia, Officer-in-Charge, potential support to help meet the capacity building needs in Sri Lanka, including developing youth entrepreneurial skills, integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), waste management and the use of UNOSAT capabilities in agriculture, disaster management & mitigation etc. was discussed.

On March 23, the Sri Lanka delegation also traveled to Bern where they had bi-lateral consultations with officials of Switzerland's State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) led by Ms. Christine Busser Mauron, Head, Bilateral Economic Relations Asia/Oceania. The focus of the discussion was on Swiss SME policy and Innovation Policy, and best practices that could be of relevance to Sri Lanka.

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25 March 2016

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**PHOTO CAPTION;**  
*Professor Klaus Schwab, Chairman of the World Economic Forum and South Asia team leaders with members of the Sri Lanka delegation at the WEF Headquarters in Geneva.*