



Minister Vitarana says Sri Lanka expects to increase high tech value added exports from 1.5 % to 10% by 2016

Senior Minister for Scientific Affairs, Prof Tissa Vitarana told the 16th Session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) held in Geneva last week, that Sri Lanka which is now a middle income country expects to increase the contribution of high tech value added exports to the national economy from the present 1.5% to 10% by 2016 through the implementation of the National strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation. Revealing details of the national strategy he mentioned that in line with the target of doubling its per capita GDP to USD 4000 by 2016, the strategy is aimed at achieving effective social economic development, through research directed on national needs, use of advanced technologies and building a culture of techno – entrepreneurship between the public & private sector partnership.

Prof. Vitarana made this observation when he participated in the Ministerial Roundtable on “Harnessing Science and Technology to address development challenges” organized at the 16th Session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) held on 3rd June 2013 in Geneva. The Roundtable which focused on how science, technology and innovation could promote inclusive and sustainable development in countries, provided a forum for the policy makers to exchange experiences, best practices and to discuss challenges faced at national level.

Prof. Vitarana shared with the audience how National Nanotechnology Initiatives (NNI) and the Vidath programme has increased its contribution to the Gross Expenditure on Research & Development (GERD) from 10% to over 30 % during the last 6 years through technology transfer in the rural micro and SME sectors. He also drew the attention of the international community on STI related challenges faced by Sri Lanka and developing countries and urged assistance in facilitating brain gain, access to scientific literature and data as a global policy, providing STI related technical assistance targeted specifically for national needs and further requested donor community and development partners to consider STI sector as an essential element for development when funding is considered.

The Ministerial Round Table was moderated by Dr. Shirley Malcom, Head of the Directorate of Education and Human Resources American Association for the Advancement of Science. The high level panelists comprised of Ministers , Vice Ministers and advisors from Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nigeria, Philippine Sri Lanka, Swaziland, USA & Zimbabwe.

The Sri Lanka delegation to the sessions led by the Minister, included Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, Chairman, Institute of Industry and Technology Prof Vijaya Kumar, and Chairperson National Science Foundation / Science Advisor & Sector Specialist of the Office of the Senior Minister for

Scientific Affairs Prof Sirimali Fernando, and Mrs Lakmini Mendis , Minister Counsellor of the Geneva Mission.

The Commission which provides the General Assembly and ECOSOC with high-level advice on relevant science and technology issues, at the annual session held from 3 – 7 June 2013, considered two priority themes during the sessions, the Science and Technology (S&T) theme being on "Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Cities and Peri-Urban Communities while the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) theme was on internet Broadband for an Inclusive Digital Society. The Sessions also assessed progress on the implementation of and follow up to the outcomes of WSIS, which is part of CSTD's mandate.

The Draft Resolution on the S&T theme adopted by the Commission at the Session was facilitated by the Sri Lankan delegate Prof Vijaya Kumar, Chairman Industrial Technology Institute in the Commission. It dealt with utilizing S&T to address problems arising from rapid urbanization particularly in developing countries.

Sri Lanka's contribution to the session was highly commended by the 43 Member countries, Observer States, Intergovernmental organizations, UN bodies, Specialized Agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative status with the ECOSOC.

Sri Lanka Mission
Geneva.