



Youth Statement from the World's Youth for Climate Justice (WYCJ) **Sri Lanka National Front**

- **What is the World's Youth for Climate Justice (WYCJ)?**

World's Youth for Climate Justice (WYCJ) is a global campaign to bring climate change and human rights before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to seek an Advisory Opinion. Through the Advisory Opinion, WYCJ aims to have the ICJ clarify the obligations of states in protecting the rights of current and future generations from the adverse effects of climate change. This campaign was initiated by students from the University of the South Pacific and has since established regional chapters in Asia, Latin America, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. WYCJ is dedicated to mobilizing civil society and youth to support this crucial campaign.

WYCJ is currently working to engage more countries in the proceedings of the International Court of Justice. We are actively encouraging states to submit written statements to the ICJ, with a deadline set by the court for January 22nd, 2024. For more information on the campaign, please do get in contact or visit the website <https://www.wy4cj.org/>

- **WYCJ Sri Lanka National Front**

The official WYCJ Sri Lanka National Front commenced on 23rd September 2023 after the successful completion of the WYCJ Asian Front 'Youth Capacity Building Program for Asian Youths' which was held at the Faculty of Law of the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. The national front is led by the research members of the Centre for Environmental Law and Policy (CELP) affiliated to the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo under the guidance of Prof. Kokila Konasinghe, Head of the Department of Public and International Law of the Faculty of Law, Director of CELP and the first Advisor of the WYCJ Asian Front. Dr. Kalana Senaratne, Acting Head of the Department of Law, Faculty of Arts of the University of Peradeniya also joined the Sri Lankan front recently as an Advisor.

This document contains different statements by the youth who are members of the WYCJ Sri Lanka Front and these statements respectively interconnect with climate justice in the context of our distinct communities, experiences and area of specialization.

Statement by Ms. Radhini Gawarammana

***BCL (Reading), University of Oxford, United Kingdom
WYCJ Sri Lanka National Front – Lead***

Our surroundings are never the same, and the relationships we form with nature and the environment around us depend on different factors. We as this nation's youth and passers of the torch to the next generation, observe inequalities in the way communities depending on Sri Lanka's natural resources are and would be impacted by climate change. In this statement, we wish to underscore the legislative neglect faced by the *Veddah* Community in the face of the climate crisis. As the indigenous peoples of Sri Lanka, the *Veddah* Community comprises of descendants from the Neolithic era stretching as far back as 14,000 BC. Scattered in the Uva, North Central, Eastern and Sabaragamuwa Provinces of the country as forest tribes and coastal dwellers, the *Veddah* Community currently face an upheaval in traditions and ways of life passed down from generation to generation due to climate change. Scarcity of water, disturbance and displacement from ancestral dwelling areas, imbalance in biodiversity, interruption in sustaining livelihood due to disrupted rainfall and migratory patterns of birds, fish, insects, and other animals are among the multitude of environmental problems faced by the Community due to the aggravation of climate change.

The inequality debate comes into the picture as we believe that a one-size-fits-all approach will not offer an effective and practicable solution to the *Veddah* Community. Indigenous populations around the world have an interaction with law and society that is different to that of the general public, largely due to varying degrees of education, isolation and marginalization inflicted on them by both the law and administration. *Veddah* heritage is Sri Lankan heritage and an indispensable thread in the fabric of our history. Greenpeace has recognized the role of indigenous people's rights in the COP15 biodiversity deal. More and more international actors are now finding it difficult to escape the amplifying indigenous voice in climate crisis decision-making. Therefore, affirmative action is required in climate justice litigation to include indigenous voices among Sri Lanka's cry for urgent action to combat the present and future disasters of climate change. After all, they were here long before we were.

Statement by Mr. Lilan Dayananda

***UNFCCC Technology Executive Committee Member
ALS Fellow of the Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago***

It is a tragedy that Sri Lanka has seen fit to follow the line expounded by the carbon emitters and polluters of the environment. The official line seems to be that our forests like the Sinharajah can absorb the carbon dioxide emitted by burning fossil fuels. This demonstrates both a lack of science and sensitivity to our history. Science tells us that forests that are mature, like the Sinharajah, do not absorb or sequester very much carbon as their potential for absorbing carbon is already filled up. This means that the Sinharajah has reached a certain height and mass that is its maximal and will maintain this, if

undisturbed for thousands or millions of years. It will not get taller or bigger, it has reached a steady state. Thus, it is not possible for such forests to absorb much carbon emitted by burning fossil fuels. However, such mature forests have a great value in terms of holding a huge amount of carbon from reaching the atmosphere as carbon dioxide. Unfortunately, the time that carbon is locked away for is still not considered a value variable by global trade. Accepting time as a value variable in carbon sequestering has been a theme that has been communicated to the officials representing Sri Lanka at the Climate Change negotiations, for over a decade. But up to now there has been no initiative from Sri Lanka to have this value recognised.

If we participate in the next round of negotiations, will we seek to maintain the myth that all Carbon entering the atmosphere through human activity is the same and has equal value? If we buy into agendas set by industrialised countries we will; If we are going to be scientific, truthful and have national interests at heart we will not!

The question “does all carbon entering the atmosphere have the same value?” Is one whose resolution can put humanity on a path to real sustainable development and could avert a cataclysmic future. Thus, it is useful to study the question in the light of scientific evidence.

These **3 points** were raised by the Sri Lanka in the Sri Lanka Country Statement, at COP 21 in Paris, which stated that:

“We are aware of the great difference in carbon dioxide that is emitted from biological sources and carbon dioxide emitted from fossil sources. One has sequestered rates measured in thousands of years while the other in millions of years. Yet the cost is still the same.”

This statement suggests that the true cost of Carbon may not be paid in the current Carbon trading regimes. That the current Carbon trading arrangements cheat the countries that they are implemented in. To understand the fraud, we must look at understanding the cycles of Carbon on this planet.

Carbon:

Carbon (C), the fourth most abundant element in the Universe, after hydrogen (H), helium (He), and oxygen (O), is the building block of life. It's the basic element that anchors all organic substances, from fossil fuels to DNA. On Earth, carbon cycles through the land, ocean, atmosphere, and the Earth's interior in a major biogeochemical cycle (the circulation of chemical components through the biosphere from or to the lithosphere, atmosphere, and hydrosphere). The global carbon cycle can be divided into two categories: the geological/ancient, which operates over large time scales (millions of years), and the biological/modern, which operates at shorter time scales (days to thousands of years).

The Global Carbon Stock:

The Global Carbon Stock began Billions of years ago, as planetesimals (small bodies that formed from the solar nebula) and carbon-containing meteorites bombarded our planet's

surface, steadily increasing the planet's Carbon content. Today such increments to the planet's Carbon stock have ceased, but the stock has become more compartmentalized. Since those times, carbonic acid (a weak acid derived from the reaction between atmospheric carbon dioxide [CO₂] and water) has slowly but continuously combined with calcium and magnesium in the Earth's crust to form insoluble carbonates (carbon-containing chemical compounds) through a process called weathering. Then, through the process of erosion, the carbonates are washed into the ocean and eventually settle to the bottom. The cycle continues as these materials are drawn into Earth's mantle by subduction (a process in which one lithospheric plate descends beneath another, often as a result of folding or faulting of the mantle) at the edges of continental plates. The carbon is then returned to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide during volcanic eruptions.

The balance between weathering, subduction, and volcanism controls atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations over time periods of hundreds of millions of years. The oldest geologic sediments suggest that, before life evolved, the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide may have been one-hundred times that of the present, providing a very different atmosphere and substantial greenhouse effect.

Fossil Carbon:

The operation of life has been clearly demonstrated to change the chemistry of earth's atmosphere to what it is today. One of the most active agents of this change were/are the oceanic plankton, photosynthetic microscopic phytoplankton that produce prodigious quantities of oxygen and biomass over time. Oxygen is released to the atmosphere and the biomass is consumed by respiring zooplankton (microscopic marine animals) within a matter of days or weeks. Only small amounts of residual carbon from these plankton settle out to the ocean bottom at any given time, but over long periods of time this process represents a significant removal of carbon from the atmosphere. This slow removal of Carbon from the primary or living atmosphere into the fossil reservoir, while at the same time adding to the atmospheric reservoir of oxygen, had a major effect on the maintenance of biotic homeostasis or 'global eco equilibrium'.

A similar process was repeated on the land especially at Devonian times with the huge vegetation mass that covered the earth absorbing Carbon Dioxide and them being mineralized in the lithosphere into coal, effectively removing that volume of carbon from earth's atmosphere, while the Oxygen released by these early prodigious forests again contributed greatly to the current chemistry of the atmosphere.

Through these processes, still active today, Carbon that enters the Lithosphere is removed completely from the biological cycle and becomes mineralized into cycles with ages of 100's of millions of years.

The biological or 'living' carbon cycle:

In the living world, the major exchange of carbon with the atmosphere results from photosynthesis and respiration. During the daytime in the growing season, leaves absorb sunlight and take up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. In the oceans the planktonic cycle functions in a similar way. Both create biomass. In parallel, plants, animals and

substrate microbes consume this carbon as organic matter and return carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. The amounts of carbon that move from the atmosphere through photosynthesis, respiration, and back to the atmosphere are large and produce oscillations in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations. This 'living' Carbon has a very significant chemical signature of carbon isotopes in the ratio of ^{13}C to ^{12}C and maintains the same isotope ratio in addition to the quantity of the rare unstable isotope ^{14}C . All carbon emitted into the atmosphere that lacks ^{14}C or has a lower $^{13}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C}$ ratio, is not a part of and does not belong in the modern or biotic cycle.

The Fossil subsidy:

It is now clear that fossil Carbon and biotic Carbon have extremely different sinks and need to be valued differentially when considering the impact on the global biosphere. While the carbon balance of the planet was greatly impacted by the postindustrial human activity of clearing the forests of this planet, it was only the trigger to the exponential increase of 'new' fossil derived carbon into the atmosphere.

A clear distinction between fossil and biotic energy and the placing of differential values on the two sources, will go a long way to expose these addicted economies and assist 'developing nations' to avoid the pitfalls. The 'fossil subsidy' required for the creation and operation of future 'development' projects should become cost criteria for acceptance or rejection of future 'development' projects.

It is now clear that there is a great danger of accepting the consumption on fossil fuels as a tool for 'development'. Once a nation or economy has become 'fossil addicted', they are willing to sacrifice their own well-being and the well-being of others to feed their addiction. However, the reticence of some Governments to face up to their global obligations, underscores the great danger of accepting the consumption on fossil fuels as a tool for 'development'. Once a nation or economy has become 'fossil addicted', they are willing to sacrifice their own well-being and the well-being of others to feed their addiction.

Back to the Sinharajah:

So, if we now go back and examine the Carbon sequestering potential of the Sinharajah. We see that it is very valuable as a 'store' or bank of sequestered carbon and we can negotiate to be paid for the time that it will store or hold its carbon from entering the atmosphere. But it will not present any significant opportunities for sequestering 'new' carbon.

There must be a clear understanding of carbon swaps and article 6 programs in the Paris Agreement, so that the carbon trading programs permitted in Sri Lanka will not become a way to release more fossil carbon stocks. What happens at the climate change meeting will tell us how much of Sri Lanka's input has been done with informed national interest.

These facts underscore the great danger of accepting the consumption on fossil fuels as a tool for national 'development'. Once a nation or economy has become 'fossil addicted', they are willing to sacrifice their own wellbeing and the well being of others to feed their addiction. This is why a clear distinction between fossil and biotic carbon and placing

differential values on the two sources, can go a long way in choosing the right options for development.

“We are aware that the optimum operating temperature of chlorophyll is at 37 deg C. In a warming world where temperatures will soar well above that, food production will be severely impacted. We would request the IPCC to address responses to this phenomenon.”

Apart from the heat stress in human and animals, it could exceed the threshold for enzymatic activity in plants. All of agriculture depends on the good growth of plants, all plants rely on their chlorophyll (the green stuff of plants) to grow and produce. Chlorophyll is an enzyme that functions well up to an optimum of about 38 degrees, above that their performance falls. In heat waves often exceeding 40 degrees plant productivity will be impacted and yields drop following the rise in temperature (fig1). This phenomenon was seen when heat waves in the spring began to reduce farmers yields.

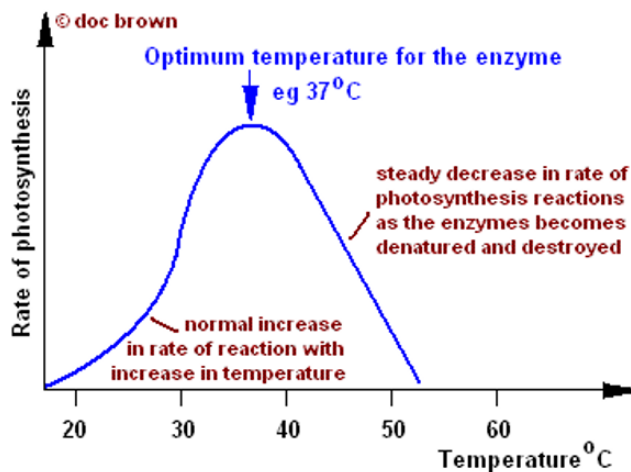


Fig 1

As an adaptive response agricultural research institutions must begin coordinating a research program to identify the genes that can confer heat tolerance crops and utilize this to reinforce the current seed production programs. Another response would be to Implement watershed design to control ambient temperatures through transpirative cooling. It has been shown that trees placed strategically on a landscape can help to reduce the ambient temperature by 3 degrees or more. This can make the difference between crop or no crop for farming communities.

“We are aware that the critical Ecosystem services such as; production of Oxygen, sequestering of Carbon, water cycling and ambient cooling is carried out by the photosynthetic component of biomass. This is being lost at an exponential rate, due to the fact that these Ecosystem Services have not been valued, nor economically recognized. We would request the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to examine the value of photosynthetic biomass.”

Photosynthetic biomass performs the act of primary production, the initial step in the manifestation of life. Biomass so termed, has the ability to increase in mass through the absorption of solar radiation while releasing oxygen and water vapor into the atmosphere, as in the leaves of plants. Respiring biomass is that component of living biomass that uses the output of primary production to make the complicated biological patterns of life; it consumes oxygen to power its functions, and does not have photosynthetic functions itself. This distinction is fundamentally important when assessing the value of the biomass that is being addressed. On land, it is the leaves of plants that have photosynthetic biomass. They drive carbon sequestration, carbohydrate production, oxygen generation and water transformation, i.e. all actions essential for the sustainability of the life support system of the planet. Yet currently, it is only the downstream product of photosynthetic biomass, usually represented by wood/timber that has been recognized as having commercial value in the carbon market for sequestering Carbon. The photosynthetic biomass for terrestrial ecosystems is largely composed of the leaves of terrestrial vegetation.

The sheer power of operation of the terrestrial photosynthetic system is seen when the volume of water released from leaves is considered, at a water release rate of 100:1, where over 100 molecules of water are released for each molecule of carbon dioxide absorbed by the leaf. The quantity of water released annually by forests and grasslands are like aerial rivers cycling about 6250 billion tons of water into the atmosphere per annum. This quantity of evaporative water not only greatly influences local cooling events, but also contributes to the distribution of heat in the atmosphere and the creation of clouds. One of the most significant consequences of evapotranspiration by terrestrial vegetation is the 'cleaning' effect on groundwater. Plants can grow in polluted ground water, but the water they transpire is clean and pure. This cleaning function is hardly recognized nor evaluated.

The recognition and evaluation of photosynthetic biomass must become a primary driver of the restoration processes discussed above. It can energize the restoration of biodiversity and the restoration of environmental services.

Another aspect of climate change is the accelerating rise in sea levels. We have to prepare for salt intrusion into coastal agricultural lands which will affect food production. Higher tides, together with the episodic intense rainfall events, will increase flooding frequencies in the lowland areas. An urgent seed breeding program will be needed to develop salt tolerant varieties of crops. As there are countries like China and Bangladesh who already possess such varieties, we should reach out to acquire material for our farmers and our breeding programs.

With sea level rise not only coastal agriculture is at risk, but also the increased risk of lowland flooding created by sudden, stochastic high precipitation events. A known feature of Climate Change. We should look to develop an architecture of raised construction to respond to flooding in flood prone areas.

When Bob Dylan sang "We don't need a weatherman to tell us which way the wind blows" he was pointing out the fact that responding to commonsense is better than setting up

universities to research on commonsense. So, here are 5 commonsense actions to address the urgent and critical issues related to climate change. Good luck with the deliberations.

Statement by Ms. Samadhi Hansani

Attorney-at-law

Legal Officer, Centre for Environmental Justice, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) were filed in 2016. For presentation at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the updated NDCs were created by the Climate Change Secretariat. Additionally, it outlined the efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from other sectors in order to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, as well as to achieve 70% renewable energy in electricity generation by 2030 and without increasing the capacity of coal power plants in the power sector. Sri Lanka commits to increasing forest cover to 32% by 2030 and reducing GHG emissions by 14.5% in the period between 2021 - 2030 through transport, power, industry, waste, agricultural, and forestry sectors. Nonetheless, the majority of Sri Lankans are ignorant of the effects of climate change, adaption strategies, and mitigation techniques. When it comes to reducing emissions and enhancing climate resilience, Sri Lanka is far behind. Lack of proper finance is one of the key causes. A major obstacle to Sri Lankan governance is the unpredictability of the nation's governments. Although we value multiparty democracy, unlike in several other democracies, Sri Lanka's political parties lack a distinct political agenda. As a result, determining who has superior environmental governance policies is challenging.

Major governance challenges include mismanagement of the environment, disregard for current policies, abuse of political power, corruption, nepotism, outdated environmental legislation, disregard for national and international obligations, and disregard for environmental services. They also do not know about national commitments, environmental agreements, or global environmental issues. Improved governance is required for climate decisions involving adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage considerations. But we do not follow such a procedure.

In 2019, the National Energy policy was updated. The national energy policy does not appear to be followed by the long-term generation & expansion plan (LTGEP) created by the Ceylon Electrical Board. For instance, LNG is necessary for LTGEP's upcoming developments. For a number of reasons, the 2019 national waste management policy is not being implemented. There is inadequate cross-sector cooperation in Sri Lanka's governance framework. For instance, as both agencies are tasked with preserving the habitats, the Forest and Wildlife departments ought to collaborate closely. There is not enough collaboration between the federal government and local governments going forward. Conflicts of interest, fraud, corruption, and other issues arise from local government levels with inadequate transparency and monitoring. Absence of a system for government coordination.

There is Lack of implementing rules, guidance, or knowledge at local government levels. A study conducted by Mahanama and Abeynayaka revealed “lack of political will and commitment at the local level, as well as a lack of a defined framework to deal with the cross-sectoral impacts of climate change among local authorities”.

Sri Lanka ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Climate Agreement. Sri Lanka contributed 0.03% of world GHG emissions in 2019; its per capita emissions in 2010 were 1.02 tons. According to updated NDCs, Sri Lanka has committed to increasing its forest cover by 32% by 2030 and reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 14.5% between 2021 and 2030 from the following sources: power (electrical generation), transportation, industry, waste, forestry, and agriculture. Thus, Sri Lanka aims to;

To achieve 70% renewable energy in electricity generation by 2030.

To achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 in electricity generation

No capacity addition of coal power plants.

To achieve the ontendent share of renewable sources for electricity production significant Investments have to be made in restructuring the country’s reliance on fossil fuels. The Ministry of Industry, the Board of Investment, the Ministry of Transportation, the Forest Department, the CEA, and other agencies must collaborate with the Climate Change Secretariat as it lacks an implementing agency. We do not, however, observe this kind of intercoordination. When compared to other industries, the agriculture industry has superior adaptation. There are not enough pledges in the transportation industry to meet the goals. For instance, there was a reason why the proposed Malabe Light Railway project was shelved. From time to time, political factors influence these choices.

The growth of renewable energy in the nation has been adversely impacted by low priority and inadequate funding. Ex : solar. But the government has also gained some traction, and it appears that the private sector is now participating. For instance, as a means of escaping the currency problem, the government’s interest in the construction of Mannar, a 100 megawatt wind farm located on the island’s southern coast, has increased. A certain amount of money has been set aside for urban forestry initiatives during the past few years. It appears that finding more funding is a responsibility beyond ministry or agency duties. This is a significant duty.

Sri Lanka emits legal amounts of carbon. But Sri Lanka is experiencing disproportionately severe weather. As a result, the national strategy that is most popular is climate justice. For more than ten years, Sri Lanka has demanded payment for climate debt. Sri Lanka anticipates financial assistance from the loss and damage fund as well as assistance with adaptation and mitigation. Sri Lanka was the second most severely affected country by climate change in 2017. The country lost about \$3,129 million. However, for a variety of reasons, Sri Lanka has only gotten a relatively little amount of climate funding to date. Sri Lanka is hence extremely susceptible to the effects of climate change. It is acknowledged that the country’s governance of the environment and climate would benefit from the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Regretfully, this was

merely a wish list and was not particularly successful. Though it lacks the funding to put the SDGs into practice, Sri Lanka has a Sustainable Development Council that was set up to oversee and assess government institutions. Concerning the management of natural resources and the climate, the idea of intergenerational equity pertains to treating and interacting with children, teenagers, adults, and seniors in a fair and just manner. Despite not being a notion used by the government in the management of natural resources, this has been extensively discussed in Sri Lankan environmental and social circles. Sri Lanka is not making more of an effort to establish climate justice, which is something that needs to be addressed and for which urgent action must be taken.

Statement by Mr. Ishan Arachchi

***LL.B. (Hons.) University of Colombo
WYCJ Sri Lanka National Front – Member
Researcher, CELP, Faculty of Law, University of Colombo***

Over the past couple of decades, the discussions on the threats of climate change and the possible solutions to it have been at the forefront of many international forums. Yet, most of these discussions were dominated by the global north from their own point of view which did not seem to align with both the attitudes and the capacity of the developing nations. The concept of climate justice – as opposed to mere climate change- emerged as a response to these overtly manifest inequalities. The progressive realization of climate justice not only at the elite discussion tables of global and regional summits but also at the ground level is crucial for a country like Sri Lanka which attempts to tackle the challenges peculiar to it as an island nation. Nonetheless, the debate about the limits as well as the very need of climate justice has been a matter of vigorous debate due to the heavily competing interests of the stakeholders to this issue.

Therefore, the necessity has arisen for an independent entity whose legitimacy is recognized by all parties to address the nuances of climate justice. It is in this backdrop that the UN resolution which seeks to obtain an advisory opinion from the ICJ on the issue of climate justice has become historic and unprecedentedly consequential. We as the youth of Sri Lanka unequivocally support this endeavor for securing a better and a more sustainable future for humanity.

Statement by Ms. Jayani Christina

***LL.B. (Hons.) University of Colombo
WYCJ Sri Lanka National Front – Member
Researcher, CELP, Faculty of Law, University of Colombo***

We, as the youth in Sri Lanka, are increasingly concerned about climate change and its impact on our country. We are actively engaged in raising awareness about environmental issues and advocating for sustainable policies. Sri Lankan youth are

pushing for government action to address climate change through measures such as reducing carbon emissions, protecting natural ecosystems, and promoting renewable energy sources. We recognize the critical nature of the climate crisis and are actively working to secure a more sustainable future for themselves and future generations in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's achievement of its conditional NDCs for GHG mitigation is contingent on substantial international assistance. Over the next decade, Sri Lanka will actively pursue climate financing and technology transfer support to enhance the utilization of renewable energy sources, expand energy storage infrastructure and modernize its electricity distribution network.

We identify that the existing governmental policy framework offers overarching principles and guidelines for the sustainable management of forests. Its vision is to transform the nation into a 'Net Carbon Zero Country' and increase natural forest coverage to 30% by 2025. The policy places a strong emphasis on identifying and reforesting suitable lands, rehabilitating and expanding green areas, reclaiming unproductive and abandoned lands for both agriculture and forestry purposes, planting trees and creating urban forest. These endeavors have the capacity to make a substantial contribution to emissions reduction, but it is imperative that they are swiftly and systematically executed according to a well-structured plan.

Statement by Ms. Dulki Seethawaka

***WYCJ Asia Front - Co-convenor
Researcher, CELP, Faculty of Law, University of Colombo***

The impacts of climate change are creating havoc and they are sparing no one, neither humans nor non-human beings. In my statement I am focusing on the importance of climate justice and protecting the non-human beings. The non-human beings, or every other living being except for humans, have been both direct and indirect victims of the climate change emergency. They have been suffering throughout for no fault of theirs. On the one hand, one of the biggest contributing factors to climate change has been the mass-scale animal agriculture industries which treat livestock in the worst possible living conditions. On the other hand, all animals have had to encounter the impacts of climate change including water scarcity, flash floods, unprecedented rain, rising temperatures, and wildfires.

Sri Lanka is known for its dense biodiversity which comprises many indigenous species of fauna and flora. It has been observed that the wildlife in Sri Lanka has also faced challenges due to the climate change impacts. Rising temperatures threaten the different species of amphibians, reptiles and birds. Water scarcity has intensified the human-elephant conflicts, endangering the lives of both humans and elephants. Wildfires and flash floods destroy ecosystems together with many valuable species of fauna and flora. Unprecedented rains which are more severe than before challenge the housing and

breeding patterns of animals. Rising sea level and global temperature also threaten the marine lives around the island.

The sixth mass extinction has already begun and many valuable species around the world are already threatened or remain vulnerable. Without wildlife, there will not be a future for our planet and we will not stand a chance. As the present generation, we have the responsibility to protect the wildlife for our future generations. Right to nature of people must include the right to peaceful enjoyment of the environment together with all living beings. It is essential to understand that together with humans, non-human beings must also survive this catastrophe. We hold an important responsibility towards animals not only because it is our duty towards future generations to protect the wildlife on this planet, but also because these animals are facing the climate crisis because of the mistakes made by humans and they are probably one of the most vulnerable groups which has no representation in the global climate justice arena and climate related discussions.

Therefore, as the Sri Lankan youth who are the present dependants as well as the guardians of the wildlife of this island, we must lead the way to protect the non-human living beings to fulfil our duty towards the future generations and survival of this planet.