STATEMENT OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA

AT COP 16, CANCUN – MEXICO, DECEMBER 2010

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Distinguish Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Madam President, I wish to congratulate you on your election as the President for this memorable 16th Conference of the Parties of UNFCCC and the 6th Meeting of the Kyoto Protocol. With your leadership, I am confident that we will be able to foster consensus for a legally binding agreement under the Long - term Corporative Action Plan and for a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. I would like to thank the Government and the people of Mexico for their warm hospitality extended to us. I am also pleased to mention that the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has made excellent arrangements for this significant event in this beautiful city of Cancun.

Madam President, global climate varies naturally, but scientists agree that raising concentrations of anthropogenically produced greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere are leading to rapid changes in the climate. It is considered to be one of the most serious threats to our existence and to our sustainability and development; with adverse impacts expected on the environment, human health, food security, economic activity, natural resources and physical infrastructure.

As an island, Sri Lanka is highly vulnerable to climate change. Extreme weather events such as severe droughts, torrential rains resulting in flash floods, loss of agricultural productivity, increased incidents of vector borne diseases and salt water intrusion due to sea level rise are some of the likely impacts of climate change on Sri Lanka.

Madam President, as an environment conscious nation Sri Lanka has initiated comprehensive action to contribute towards local, regional and global efforts in combating Climate change. We are integrating unavoidable climate change scenarios into national sustainable development plans.

Current per capita GHG emissions in Sri Lanka indicates that country's Greenhouse Gas emission is absolutely negligible. This means that its potential for contributing to the mitigation of global GHG emission is minimal, even though Sri Lanka is committed to stabilizing emission of greenhouse gases, as a signatory to the Framework Convention on Climate Change its legally binding Kyoto Protocol.

In this connection our contribution has been more on removal processes. A 1.1 million island wide tree planting programme under the theme "Deyata Sevana" was concluded successfully in 11 minutes on 15th November this year, which really exceeded 3 million, with massive community participation.

Madam President, the Sri Lankan government has initiated to promote alternative and clean energy sources as a means of responding to climate change as well. The Government intends to balance socioeconomic and environmental goals by promoting energy conservation and efficiency, improving the institutional capacity to develop and manage the energy sector. The Government will endeavour to reach a minimum level of 10% of electrical energy supplied to the grid to be from non conventional renewable energy by 2015 through this process of facilitation.

Understandably, we need to confront and overcome the challenge of climate change; and that can change it in a way that is environmentally sustainable. The scientific findings indicate that precautionary and prompt action is necessary for sustainable living for everyone on the planet. We have a long way to go. We must bear in mind that it is our collective responsibility to save our planet. It is a long-term challenge for all and the cost of action will be lower if all countries work together and act quickly with sharing the burden fairly.

Madam President, the global policy decisions have to set in place to tackle the climate change issues in accordance with the principle of common but different responsibilities and respective capabilities. A comprehensive framework for action on adaptation needs a scaled up financial, technological and other support in confronting the adaptation challenges. The way forward, depends on how global community is united to device an operational architecture for long-term global cooperation on Climate Change. We strongly believe that it will be possible to reach consensus on critical issues and agree on clear and comprehensive decisions for adoption at the end of this conference session.

As an environment friendly nation we urge all of you to join hands to confronting the challenges of climate change and to protect our climate system for the benefit of the present and future generations.

I thank you all for your kind attention.