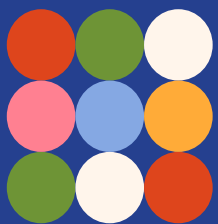


# Prioritising Nature Conservation: A Message for the Next Sri Lankan Parliament



# Why this is vital now

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Current and future governments of Sri Lanka face several significant challenges, e.g., economic recovery beyond the debt crisis, facilitating the creation of sustainable livelihoods and green jobs, restructuring the public sector, and improving governance and accountability. It may seem that adding to that list further burdens a government already facing a daunting task. Yet, the “environment” is more than just nature, animals or forests – the physical world around us affects every aspect of our social, economic and political lives, as citizens and as human beings, and is vital for economic recovery and continued economic development.

This document aims to show the links between environmental health the development, and strategic policy decisions can have a highly positive–and essential–impacts on both Sri Lanka’s social and economic situation [ ] in the short-, medium-, and long-term as well as political wins and concrete policy achievements for politicians and political parties that enable good and stable governance, by adopting this broader strategic view of the environment into their policies and actions.



# Why a focus on biodiversity and nature is vital now

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**Today, the environment, writ large, poses an unsurpassed opportunity for Sri Lanka, its people and any new government of Sri Lanka is done right, but also a massive threat if neglected or mismanaged.**

On the opportunity side, global interest and investment in climate resilience, environmental conservation and restoration, and ecological integrity is at an all-time high, especially with the realization that our Planet is now perilously close to a tipping point beyond which recovery may not be possible and poses an existential threat to humanity. Sri Lanka has an opportunity to offer the world a new development success story - an economy that navigated a debilitating debt crisis, to chart a truly nature-positive recovery. Healthy forests and free-flowing, healthy streams and rivers, and intact coastal ecosystems are important for climate-change mitigation, and for building climate resilience - especially against floods, recurring droughts, landslides, coastal erosion, storm surges, etc. Conservation of these ecosystems at scale is an imperative for a safe and healthy future for all Sri Lankans and to sustain economic development and prosperity. While there has been some increased attention to these issues by successive Sri Lankan governments in recent years, many efforts have not been substantive or sustained, and at times have been superficial, with contradictory decisions and mutually-defeating efforts.

On the threat side, Sri Lanka has consistently ranked among the top ten countries at risk of extreme weather events by the Global Climate Risk Index and over the past few years, we have all experienced how Sri

Lanka's environmental challenges are intensifying. Just a few examples: climate change has altered the seasonal monsoon patterns, putting the livelihoods of farmers at risk; overfishing has decimated local fisheries, putting livelihoods of generations of fishermen at risk; population growth has expanded human settlements and put pressure on urban infrastructure; loss of natural wilderness habitats are increasing human-elephant conflict; and increased rainfall in the monsoon season combined with decreased forest cover has intensified landslide risks, threatening the homes and lives of many Sri Lankans; and natural disasters sever transportation and communication conduits placing foreign direct investment at risk. Overall, Sri Lankans are facing increasing threats to their economic prosperity, social stability and the ecological balance around them, which, if not swiftly and comprehensively addressed, will become an increasingly negative, vicious cycle that becomes progressively harder to mitigate or resolve.

The new President and the next Government have an opening to turn a threat into an opportunity by prioritising conservation efforts, strengthening decision-making abilities through engagement with public and private sector stakeholders, and cutting through inefficient government procedures.

# What this document is



This *citizen's manifesto* is, on one hand, an immediate rallying call for politicians and political parties contesting in the forthcoming General Elections to urgently focus their attention on these conservation and environmental priorities; and on the other hand, it is a roadmap for a future government to chart a nature-positive economic recovery that can benefit generations of Sri Lankans to come and present a positive and inspiring story about Sri Lanka to the world.

This document has been compiled by a coalition of Sri Lankan professionals – scientists, researchers, conservationists, economists, public policy specialists, lawyers, and activists – directly involved in various aspects of conservation and who have on-the-ground experience tackling environmental challenges in Sri Lanka. **We have no political affiliation or agenda, but are coming together to issue this heartfelt message to all political leaders to give our shared environment its due importance as an integral part of national, regional and local development strategy and public policy-making.**



**Our manifesto calls for the following four (4) key areas to be prioritised, first, by parliamentary candidates running for the 2024 General Election and, second, by the new national government that emerges out of the General Election:**

**01.**

Honour and meet Sri Lanka's nature conservation commitments made under international environmental treaties.

**02.**

Reorient development policies to focus on conservation and environmentally responsible growth, putting nature at the heart of Sri Lanka's economic recovery.

**03.**

Strengthen land-use and land-sharing policies, by tightening governance around protected areas, environmentally-sensitive areas, other state forests, etc., and minimising conflicts between natural ecosystems and human activity.

**04.**

Reform government institutions responsible for environmental management, regulation, and conservation, by ensuring they can effectively and independently discharge their mandates, without political interference, and with adequate financial and technical resources.

# What we are asking of political candidates and parties



We are asking national-minded and future-oriented political parties and their candidates to:

- Publicly state their commitment to a broader, strategic view of the environment that recognizes its importance across diverse policy, planning and governance areas;
- Incorporate conservation priorities into their own political manifestos, together with firm commitments to setting up meaningful national policy mechanisms to tackle challenges facing nature and biodiversity;
- Demonstrate their commitment to working with professionals across the sector to ensure that environmental policies and initiatives are (1) designed through an evidence-based and inclusive process, (2) implemented in a timely, effective and efficient manner and (3) duly monitored and evaluated to provide public information about the impact of said policies and initiatives.



# 01. Honour and meet Sri Lanka's nature conservation commitments made under international environmental treaties

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## Key Issues and Guiding Principles

Sri Lanka's nature conservation commitments span both the oceans and the land. For example, pursuant to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Sri Lanka undertook the **30x30 Commitment to protect 30% of Sri Lanka's sea area and 30% of land areas by 2030**.

With regard to the seas and marine ecosystems, Sri Lanka's oceans are home to a rich and diverse array of ecosystems and habitats, including coral reefs, seagrass beds, lagoons, mangroves, and deep-water trenches. These habitats support thousands of marine species, such as coral reef vertebrates, invertebrates, dugongs, marine turtles, sharks, dolphins, and whales. The CBD 30x30 Commitment towards declaring at least 30% of territorial waters for marine protection by 2030 is considered an imperative to achieve biodiversity conservation, enhance a sustainable fishery and secure the long-term health of our planet, Earth. However, Sri Lanka's current marine protected areas (MPAs) system covers less than 1% of the country's territorial waters and even less of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and fail to adequately represent the ecosystems or provide necessary spatial coverage for the species and ecological communities.

Over the past decade there has been a global shift toward expanding marine protected areas systems to cover seascapes to meet the ecological requirements of species, ecosystem representation, ecological flows

and dynamics, and to sequester blue carbon to mitigate climate change. Sri Lanka has been a nominal part of this shift, as a member of the **Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BoBLME)** project that included eight countries, extending from the South Asian countries to Thailand and Indonesia and as a member of the **Commonwealth Blue Charter**, which is dedicated to resolving ocean-related problems and meeting commitments for sustainable ocean development and already has several supporting marine policies and objectives in place to support marine conservation at scale. However, Sri Lanka has failed to progress with these commitments and within these organisations.

Finally, even when Sri Lanka showed vision and leadership with regard to ocean conservation and protection, such as when Sri Lanka proposed declaring the **Indian Ocean a "Zone of Peace"** during the 26th United Nations General Assembly in 1971, such efforts been stalled. While the resolution was adopted, it was not ratified because of objections by more powerful global powers outside the region, and the initiative has languished since then. Sri Lanka has long been recognized as a global biodiversity hotspot, harbouring a rich variety of flora and fauna, including many charismatic and iconic species and endemic species. The loss of endemic species due to our failure as stewards will result in their extinction, erasing a rich biological heritage that has evolved over millennia. The majority of the endemic species are in Sri Lanka's wet zone, while the dry zone supports important populations of globally

iconic species. Therefore, meeting the 30x30 Commitment target for protection of terrestrial ecosystems—and the freshwater ecosystems embedded within the terrestrial realm—and effectively managing them for conservation is an imperative. Sri Lanka has already undertaken some commitments that will move us towards protection of land ecosystems – for example, a commitment to “increase Sri Lanka’s forest cover to 32% by 2030” as a **Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris CoP** and a commitment to “restore 200,000 hectares of forest land,” pursuant to the “Sri Lanka Next: Blue Green Era,” initiative, as pledged at the **Bonn Convention**.

## Critical Focus Areas and Specific Recommendations

- With regard to marine ecosystems:



- Under the auspices of the CBD 30x30 Commitment, over 80 nations have already signed on and committed to achieving the ‘30x30’ marine protected areas target. As an island nation with high marine biodiversity, Sri Lanka must join this collective of responsible nations by **announcing our national commitment to expanding our marine protected areas** (MPAs) system to cover 30% of Sri Lanka’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) by 2030

- **Identify and declare important coastal ecosystems** such as mangroves, reefs, and dunes as areas of high priority for building resilience against climate change impacts.

- Demonstrate global leadership in ocean conservation by revisiting the Indian Ocean “Zone of Peace” initiative, this time by **declaring our own EEZ as a ‘Mega Marine Peace Park’ in the Indian Ocean**, developing a Marine Spatial Plan to identify use-zones (in consultation with all relevant stakeholders and key regional and global partners) and setting the stage for other regional countries to follow.

- With regard to terrestrial ecosystems:



- **Create and maintain forested landscapes** that will support functioning and sustained ecosystem processes, and maintain healthy and resilient ecosystems at scale to meet the CBD 30x30 Commitment, and pledges to the Paris Climate CoP pledge, and Bonn Convention.



- In the wet zone, this would specifically mean protecting existing forest patches and restoring intervening areas to **create larger, connected forests** that stabilise slopes, regulate water release, sequester carbon, contribute to clean air, and protect important (endemic) biodiversity.
- In the dry zone, this would specifically mean **creating forested landscapes to provide ecological connectivity** for the large space-requiring species such as elephants, leopard, bear, that also contribute significantly to a thriving tourism sector. These landscapes will also help to alleviate human-wildlife conflicts.
- In both wet and dry zones and across the island, this would mean increasing ecological connectivity in zones subject to climate-driven changes through landscape approaches and working in a strategic way with the private sector, especially the estate and plantation sector, to **identify, restore, and conserve forest corridors** within these land-use areas, as part of their FSC, RSPO and other sustainability obligations
- Expand the extent of “Protected Area” (PAs) to **enhance the PA network’s ability to buffer climate change.**
- Manage climate-sensitive areas and **restore degraded areas** inside and outside Protected Areas (PAs) to conserve habitats vulnerable to climate change.

- With regard to both the marine and terrestrial ecosystems,



○ these landscapes will not only be confined to protected areas, but will also include sustainable use areas which permit Sri Lankans to benefit from such natural resources in a sustainable manner.



Sri Lanka’s 6th National Report to the CBD has taken into account international targets and global commitments and presented **a landscape-scale conservation strategy and plan** that needs to be reviewed and actioned.

# 02. Reorient development policies to focus on conservation and environmentally responsible growth, putting nature at the heart of Sri Lanka's economic recovery.

## Key Issues and Guiding Principles

Sri Lanka is still emerging from its recent severe economic crisis, exacerbated by the global shocks of the pandemic and the energy crisis. Our economic recovery, and our recovery from the social consequences of the debt crisis, are still underway. We believe this presents a valuable opportunity, as Sri Lanka's post-crisis recovery need not simply follow the same path as before. Trying to 'build back better' by returning to economic policies and established industries that have served us in the past is simply not enough - natural capital must be at the heart of the country's economic recovery, and environmental considerations must be central to government development policies. It is no longer an option - it is a critical imperative globally and one that Sri Lanka is well poised to execute.

As a global biodiversity hotspot (one of just thirty-six), Sri Lanka is blessed with a myriad of ecosystems that can support Sri Lanka's economic recovery if monetized

in a responsible and sustainable manner. Pragmatic conservation interventions such as Blue Carbon programmes, Biodiversity Credit or Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes which have been successfully implemented in other regions and countries can be a valuable addition to Sri Lanka's economic portfolio. These could be used to introduce climate finance and green finance solutions - both at a sovereign level and also at a private-sector level - with genuine concern for the environmental outcomes and community impacts. Communities in regions that are most at risk from climate change impacts - especially in the North and North Western Provinces - require a seat at the table from the very beginning.

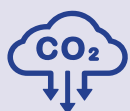
In addition to climate finance and green finance opportunities, climate-focused industries can contribute towards Sri Lanka's growth, and focusing on the creation of jobs through green industries must be a priority for post-crisis recovery.



## Critical Focus Areas and Specific Recommendations



- Specifically recognise **the importance of natural capital in our economic growth** and commit to making the environment a core consideration rather than a residual consideration in policy and planning. One specific recommendation in this area is to change how we measure economic progress and growth, by joining the UN System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), which provides a way to prioritise environmental and natural capital valuation.



- **Identify, develop and promote Nature Based Solutions (NBS)** such as Blue Carbon Credits, Biodiversity Credits, Payment for Ecosystem Services, taking care to ensure that such climate finance and green finance instruments are nuanced, systematic and inclusive - placing environmental objectives and community impacts front and centre and not merely used as an instrumental tool to strengthen public finance, debt sustainability, and foreign capital inflows.



- Ensure the long-term conservation of Sri Lanka's Protected Area (PAs) network through systematic and science-driven conservation, while also facilitating human-wildlife coexistence in the human-dominated landscape. This will reduce pressure on the parks, allow livelihood development, mitigate conflict, and draw foreign investment and visitors to Sri Lanka.



- Develop and enforce sustainable wildlife viewing programmes across Sri Lanka's PA network.



- Explore public-private partnerships to develop Department of Forest Conservation (DFC) lands as nature parks for conservation research, training zones and safari zones.

# 03. Strengthen land-use and land-sharing policies, by tightening governance around protected areas, environmentally-sensitive areas, Other State Forests (OSFs), etc., and minimising conflicts between natural ecosystems and human activity.

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## Key Issues and Guiding Principles

Protecting and investing in both the biodiversity and nature of Sri Lanka as well as in the economic and social upliftment of its people means finding a way for the natural world and the human world to co-exist and, indeed, thrive side-by-side, in harmony and together. It is crucial to minimise conflicts between natural ecosystems and human activities to ensure a sustainable future for Sri Lanka. This necessitates a strong focus on and a clear framework for land-use and land-sharing.

On this front, while there are several existing measures in place, the implementation of such measures has been patchwork and ad-hoc, leading to significant shortcomings. The immediate next step for any new government - and an easy political win - would be to commit to implementing existing measures to tighten governance around protected areas, environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs), other state forests (OSFs), the Managed Elephant Reserve (MER) and other critical natural landscapes. For example, a Managed Elephant Reserve (MER) has been established to prevent human-elephant conflict; this is a necessary and highly commendable initiative, however implementation is failing as the current governance framework lacks accountability, and disputes among inter-departmental processes remain unaddressed.

The next step would be to adopt transparent and data-driven land use planning and protection of areas of ecological value. Spatial and other planning tools must take a science-driven and species-driven conservation approach by designing a system in the best interest of the animal and its ecosystem needs while supporting human-wildlife coexistence. The absence of robust land-use planning and weak implementation will result in deferred, costly interventions that may have been easily remediated with well-informed, timely interventions.

For example, successive elected officials have publicly committed to review the outdated Land Use Policy that dates back to 2007 but these promises have not materialised. Without a sustainable and forward-thinking land management policy that recognises the value of Sri Lanka's majestic biodiversity and balances that with the land-use needs of a growing population, unchecked exploitation will persist, leading to poorly informed decisions that focus on the short-term and thereby compromise biodiversity targets and increase human-animal conflict as well as hinder efforts to move Sri Lanka toward a green and blue economy.

## Critical Focus Areas and Specific Recommendations

- With regards to the due implementation of existing measures:



- **Properly implement the Managed Elephant Reserves (MER)** declaration by:

resolving jurisdictional disputes between the multiple government departments currently responsible for implementation and clearly identifying which departments are responsible for each area, so there can be no confusion and abdication of responsibility; removing encroachers and halting additional land distributions within the MER;

Reforestation and restoring the heavily degraded landscape within the MER and preventing further degradation

- With regard to medium to long-term planning:



- **Review of the National Land Use Policy**, originally prepared in 2007, is long overdue. The needs of Sri Lanka's human population and its biodiversity mass have evolved significantly since 2007 and any forward-thinking land-use policy must also evolve to account for these changes.

- **Introduce strategic spatial planning such as islandwide "Integrated Strategic Environmental Assessments."** This is foundational to ensuring the sustainable use of Sri Lanka's natural resources and enables the government to make informed economic decisions that attract investment while identifying and protecting critical ecosystems from irreversible damage.

- **Safeguard Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) by restricting activities** in all ESAs identified by the Ministry of Environment's Biodiversity Committee until detailed biodiversity assessments are completed. Only activities that promote conservation and increase habitat quality should be permitted. Since ESAs are mostly found within Other State Forest (OSF) land and lie outside the Protected Area Network, they are highly vulnerable. The Ministry of Environment is urged to **expedite regulations being formulated to retain the OSFs within the Forest Department.**

○ Proactively design and implement land-use planning and policies to meet **Sri Lanka's concrete forestation commitments under international environmental treaties** – most notably, the commitment to “increase Sri Lanka's forest cover to 32% by 2030” as a Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Climate CoP and the commitment to “restore 200,000 hectares of forest land,” pursuant to the “Sri Lanka Next: Blue Green Era,” initiative, as pledged at the Bonn Convention.<sup>1</sup>

● Planning instruments targeted at increasing forest cover and ecological connectivity should prioritise the following:



○ **Identifying and designating “priority” landscapes** (see map below, showing our proposed five priority landscapes). Four of the landscapes are in the dry zone, and are large areas with ecological connectivity to conserve viable populations of Sri Lanka's large mammals. The fifth is in the wet zone, where patches of forests can be connected with strategic restoration, to conserve the endemic species and sustain ecosystem services.

○ **Prioritising the conservation of all wet zone forests** that support irreplaceable biodiversity. Conserving these existing forests is imperative since restoring complex rainforests is challenging. Since endemic species within wet zone forests are small and have small ranges, even small patches of forest are extremely important and must be preserved.

○ **Managing wildlife department parks and forest reserves as single ecological units**, with targeted restoration of forest patches outside the protected area network (e.g ESAs, MER), to create larger landscapes with ecological connectivity.

● With regard to both the more immediate implementation of existing measures and the longer-term proactive planning, existing land-use activities must be duly considered and stakeholders must be properly engaged and consulted – **a community-based conservation planning approach will be critical to support human-animal coexistence.**



# 04. Reform government institutions responsible for environmental management, regulation, and conservation, by ensuring they can effectively and independently discharge their mandate, without political interference, and with adequate human, financial and technical resources.

## Key Issues and Guiding Principles

To date, Sri Lanka has unfortunately under-invested in human resources in key agencies responsible for environmental management, regulation, and conservation, especially at a time when threats to the environment are at an all-time high. The most cutting-edge policy document is worthless if it cannot be properly implemented. Much of Sri Lanka's success or failure in the realm of nature conservation will hinge upon the strength of the human resources and human capital that is available to put strategy into practice on the ground.

Furthermore, data and information sharing among agencies are poor, and "turf wars" between agencies are commonplace. The establishment of parallel government initiatives and institutional structures to address climate change, climate finance, and the 30x30 Commitments under the CBD, although originally created with good intentions to enhance coordination, in current practice more often than not create inefficiencies and redundancies that undermine long-term sustainability. This duplication of efforts can result in wasted time, resources, and energy. Unless duly addressed, overlapping mandates and unclear demarcation of responsibilities will continue to feature in the environmental governance of the country,

resulting in us slipping back on global and national commitments. Sri Lanka must address environmental issues through a landscape approach, where relevant departments work together to provide integrated solutions. Currently, each department or institution tends to implement individual actions without considering the overall impact or coordinating with other organisations in the same field. It is vital to strengthen cooperation when addressing conservation issues and highlight the relationships, communication and transparency between inter-governmental bodies to ensure efficient, timely and effective outcomes.

Sri Lanka's environmental governance is also heavily centralised, significantly impeding effective on-the-ground action. Decision-making authority is often concentrated at the top levels of government. This centralization creates a disconnect between policy decisions and local needs, hindering timely and effective responses to environmental challenges at the grassroots level.

Finally, severe governance risks are observed, where political influence in the decision-making of these agencies is rife, with short-term, election-focused priorities and patronage often overshadowing scientific, ecological and community-driven priorities. The new

government has a key opportunity to follow through and deliver on the Sri Lankan people's hopes and expectations of anti-corruption and effectiveness in public, government institutions.

It is also important to note that the absence of a culture of monitoring and evaluation within the public service, even among regulatory authorities, is severely impeding the ability of institutions to take a strategic approach to planning, for example by looking critically at what worked or did not work in the past and why and adjusting accordingly before moving forward. This lack of monitoring and evaluation in turn leads to a wastage of limited resources, as well as damaging or weak environmental and socioeconomic outcomes.





## Critical Focus Areas and Specific Recommendations

- With regard to human resource development and management:



- appoint a commission to **undertake a systematic review of human resource deficiencies in the key agencies responsible for environmental management, regulation and conservation**. The commission must provide recommendations on staffing and training within a year of appointment to the President and Prime Minister in order to ensure that the Department of Wildlife and Conservation (DWC), Forest Department (FD), Central Environment Authority (CEA) and other environmental protection departments (and cross-cutting departments that have environmental interests) are adequately staffed and that recruitment, promotions, hiring and placements occur in a fair, transparent and depoliticised manner.
- **safeguard wildlife rangers** tasked with carrying out often risky operations to apprehend poachers and other illegal activities – these individuals are on the front-lines of nature conservation and currently often act with inadequate protection and support, endangering their lives.
- **prioritise training for law-enforcement wildlife officials for rapid response** to ensure their ability to respond effectively to wildlife-driven crimes like bushmeat and snaring backed by an adequate process for successful litigation.
- **increase enforcement against infringement on protected areas** by undertaking capacity-building for environmental-law personnel and putting in to place a transparent, rapid response mechanism to ensure that any encroachment into Protected Areas (PAs) or Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) can be timely contested and halted when necessary.
- **deploying resources to monitor the effectiveness of the current judicial environmental law** litigation outcomes
- **encourage young professionals within the public service to consider a career in biodiversity and nature conservation** through training programs and other professional opportunities.

- With regards to inter-agency coordination, data and information-sharing:



- the **National Council for Disaster Management**, an apex government body, is well-placed to broaden and strengthen existing mechanisms to mitigate natural disasters and adapt to climate change. This body should utilise its existing oversight and accountability mechanisms set out under the Disaster Management Act No.13 of 2005 **to monitor funding, strategic planning, and coordination of government bodies and initiatives related to climate change. The NCDM should aim to: (1) increase coordination and collaboration** between existing departments, universities and research institutions, (2) **ensure data collection** is undertaken at the district level and that officials are empowered to log and share critical and non-sensitive data across government departments and (3) introduce a **mechanism for community consultation** to ensure government bodies address their need to build resilience to climate change.

- With regards to the decentralisation of decision-making,



- **fund-allocation and planning for departments like the DWC and FD should be decentralised and localised** so that decision makers such as Park Wardens are able to target and more effectively utilise resources to address challenges they have identified as priorities within their specific jurisdiction.

- With regards to monitoring and evaluation,



- enact the proposal raised at the National Biodiversity Target Setting 2024 forum convened by the Biodiversity Secretariat to establish a centralised geoplatform and data clearinghouse mechanism to **enable robust monitoring and evaluation within the Ministry of Environment**, to streamline reporting and establish a clear understanding of the cumulative impact of actions on our fragile landscapes.

# Way Forward – Ensuring Action and Accountability

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While there are numerous environmental challenges that need to be addressed in Sri Lanka, this document focussed on the above four (4) areas given their criticality in ensuring healthy ecosystems, and in turn a healthy society and economy. We believe that these areas often do not get sufficient attention in public policy matters, as the systemic impacts on society and the economy are less well understood.

Through this manifesto, we have attempted to improve this understanding, and to raise attention so they can be prioritised by the next government, and indeed the next group of legislators elected to Parliament. Addressing these four areas, and making meaningful progress, will require a coherent and collaborative effort by many stakeholders. The individuals who prepared this manifesto, together with others, are willing and able to contribute to genuine national efforts around this agenda.

We recommend the government establish a multi-stakeholder group to guide its policies and initiatives around biodiversity and nature conservation, and to provide independent advisory and accountability to implement the above four areas. This can ensure that things happen, but also that things happen well. Accountability to a multi-stakeholder group, and advisory from an interdisciplinary group of professionals can help the next government achieve its objectives.

We also recommend that the Parliamentary Sectoral Oversight Committee (SOC) responsible for environment and natural resource issues also study this document and take up these issues, once the SOC is reconstituted under the new Parliament. We urge the new Chair of the Committee to consider including this group in relevant deliberations of the Committee, and use the group as an independent expert panel to periodically engage with the SOC members.



This document is prepared as a thought contribution by a group of practitioners in the Sri Lankan environmental space. They include,



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