



Institute of Town Planners Sri Lanka

Facing the Future With Confidence

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Statement of the Institute of Town Planners Sri Lanka (ITPSL)

Immediate Implementation Strategy to the Crisis Recovery

1 Background

We, the Institute of Town Planners, Sri Lanka (ITPSL) put our hands together with all the other professionals, and people in Sri Lanka in this critical moment in our history to overcome the economic crisis associated with social and political unrest, and humanitarian issues. We, Town Planners have served the country for over 40 years in spatial planning interventions at national, regional, and local levels and implemented projects of national significance making a considerable contribution to the nation's development. In the globalization world, urban areas play the role of engines in national economic development and thus, we are committed to making our urban areas productive to play that role to overcome the present crisis significantly.

2 Proposed Urgent Steps – Confidence Building

However, to get over the current economic turmoil the urgent requirement is to **establish investor confidence and create enabling financing environment**, which requires establishing social and political stability, to achieve this we propose the following urgent steps:

2.1 Constitutional Changes

Constitutional changes, that have been a long-felt need. We agree on some of the Bar Association of Sri Lankas' (BASL) proposals namely, (i) repealing the 20th amendment introducing the 21st Amendment by improving the 19th Amendment; re-establishing the constitutional council and independent commissions, (ii) establishing a 15-member government of national unity, (iii) abolishing the executive presidency and replacing it with a parliamentary executive responsible to the Parliament, and (iv) to enact anti-corruption laws and establish implementation mechanisms.

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2.2 National List MPs

For the interim government of national unity, we propose all the political parties get their national list MPs to resign and appoint **subject specialized professionals based on meritocracy having a local and global presence, without any political affiliations**, to the national list. Some of them, should also be given the key ministerial portfolios.

2.3 Project Appraisal

Re-introducing the project appraisal process at the Ministry of Finance and Planning, as it was before. Even the unsolicited proposals should undergo project appraisal. Considering urgently needed investments unsolicited proposals can be accepted but they need to go through a transparent selection process.

2.4 Auditing

Strengthening financial auditing by integrating a technical auditing system through the engagement of qualified technical/professional people.

2.5 Taxation

Re-establishing the lost tax base without suppressing the general public, which was one of the key causes of the present economic crisis. Introduce an advanced automated tax collection system to eliminate loopholes in the present tax leakages.

2.6 Foreign Service

Depoliticize the foreign service and establish a transparent system to recruit staff to the foreign service who are qualified and competent to showcase Sri Lanka in the respective countries for mutual benefits.

2.7 Heads of Public Institutions

Depoliticize appointing higher officers to public institutions and establish a transparent system to appoint competent professionals.

2.8 Rights of Public

Strengthen the “Right for Non-Violence Protests”.

We are of the view that the above proposals will immediately bring about the much-needed social and political stability, which is the fundamental need for “Re-establishing good Governance”, acceptable to the public, the international community, and Investors. It will

also provide a solid environment for the Sri Lankan expatriates to donate much-needed forex for the immediate recovery of their motherland.

The restructuring of the loan repayments and seeking the assistance of the IMF, WB, ADB and other multinational financial institutions would be further strengthened by implementing the above proposals.

3 Urgent Economic Recovery Proposals

While the above proposals are being implemented, as an urgent step, we propose to the Government the following as an urgent need to mitigate the Forex crisis:

3.1 Tourism

Focus on tourism which brought 4,380.6 Mn USD in 2018. Covid 19 pandemic becoming neutralized and establishing political and social stability will make the most wanted prerequisite to re-generate the tourism industry. The significance of the tourism industry is its strong network connecting many other sectors to create multiple direct and indirect job opportunities and income sources.

3.2 Sustainable Debt Restructuring and Spatial Planning

In partnering with International Financial Institutions (IFIs), Creditors, and non-state sector nature conservation groups, GoSL should restructure its external sovereign debt, by using "Debt-for-Nature Swaps", "Climate/Green and Blue Bonds". It is an option to forgo part of its debt or service in return for an aggressive commitment to achieving its international commitments, including the Glasgow Summit (Environment, Social and Governance), Paris Agreement, Rio Conventions, IPCC commitments, Montreal Protocol.

Such debt restructuring processes can be rationally integrated with tourism through the implementation of "National Physical Plan" and "Regional Physical Plans" prepared by the National Physical Planning Department, as it has a direct bearing on the conservation of the natural environment, mitigation of impacts of climate change, and implementation of climate-smart spatial planning systems.

3.3 Incentives for Foreign Employees

Provide incentives (most of them had been discussed before by many institutions) to foreign workers to encourage sending remittances to local banks,

3.4 Accelerate Food Production

Focus on food production as we foresee a serious food shortage in the near future. We can assist the relevant institutions to implement “an accelerated Agricultural policy” through urban and regional planning interventions. Urban agriculture is an effective complementary source of food production in crisis situations.

3.5 Mitigating Fuel Dependency in Urban Areas

Urban development institutions to integrate walkability and cycling-friendly transport network in urban areas to reduce both fuel dependency and Co 2 emissions.

4 Further Actions

The present crisis is too complex. Thus, finding solutions for the long-term stability of the country needs a series of studies and consultations among all the stakeholders. However, a vision and development strategy for all sectors should be introduced, which will not change with the change of governments.

5 Conclusion

We the TOWN PLANNERS of ITPSL are committed to working with other allied professionals and government institutions to contribute voluntarily to working out solutions to overcoming the crisis and establishing long term stability of our motherland.



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President,

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