



9th Sri Lanka Biennial Conference on Science and Technology

BICOST-IX

Thursday, 23rd – Friday, 24th March 2023

Waters Edge, Battaramulla

Biennial Conference on Science and Technology BICOST IX - 2023

The National Science and Technology Commission (NATSEC) is an apex body for advising the government on formulating science and technology policies, plans, and strategies. The NASTEC is governed by a 7-member commission appointed by H.E. the President of Sri Lanka for a 3-year term. Since December 2022, Professor Veranja Karunaratne, a prominent professor of chemistry, has held the position of 9th Chairperson of the Commission. The convening of the Biennial Conference on Science and Technology (BICOST) is one of the five core mandated activities of the NASTEC, as per Section 5(e) of the Science and Technology Development Act of 1994/11. The forum intends to provide a platform to discuss science and technology (S & T) in Sri Lanka in relation to the objectives set out in Section 2 of the Act, such as promoting S & T as an integral part of the effort to achieve rapid economic development to improve quality of life and alleviate poverty; fostering S & T activity in all its aspects; supporting the development of indigenous technology for rapid growth in the development of industry, agriculture, and other services; encouraging and strengthening cooperation between scientists in Sri Lanka and scientists abroad to provide global S & T knowledge; and identifying the priority areas in S & T that will be beneficial to Sri Lanka, to name a few (*please refer to the details in the http://www.nastec.gov.lk/files/nastec_act/English_Copy.pdf*). In line with this, the last conference was held in 2016, and the National Research and Development Framework implementation strategy 2016–2020 was the main by-product of it. Then the conference for 2018 was planned to be held under the theme of science, technology, innovation, and commercialization for sustainable development with the participation of His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka, as is customary, but it was cancelled at the last moment due to unforeseeable circumstances, just prior to the two days of the event with all the arrangements for the conference being in final order. Thereafter, the conference was compelled to be postponed from time to time due to a series of circumstances, most notably the COVID pandemic in the country, which lasted until mid-2021. The failure to convene the conference might have had a significant impact on supporting evidence-based decision-making processes



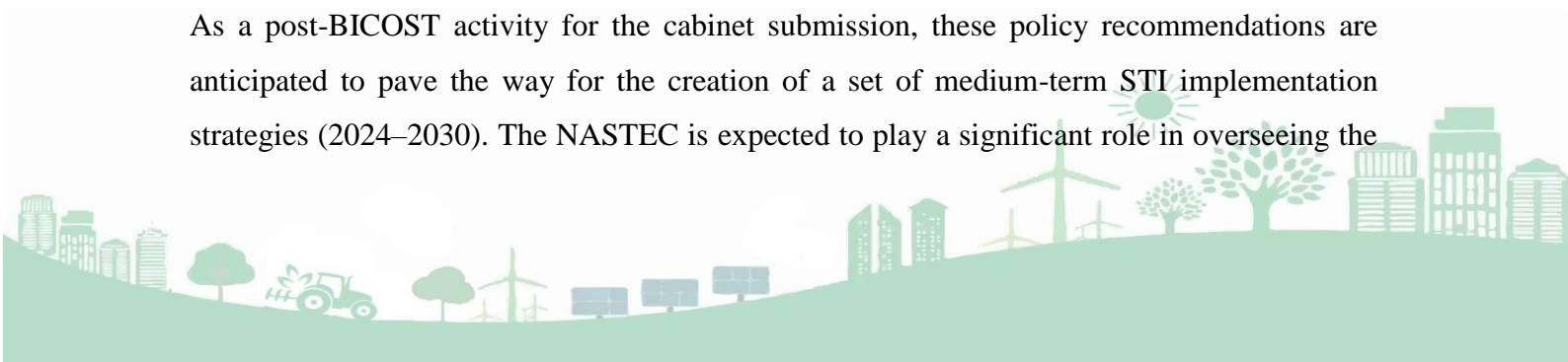
during those difficult periods. This would be one of the reasons for the country's current economic hardships as a whole.

By considering the above, NASTEC has pledged to convene the event in 2023, which means that after 7 years of the commencement of the last program, under the patronage of the subject minister of science and technology (currently the Hon. Minister of Education, Dr. Susil Premajayantha), with the theme "Science, Technology, and Innovation for Sustainable Development in the Era of Climate Change," over two days on March 23 and 24, 2023. The two-day conference consists of four parallel technical sessions on the thematic areas of: (01), Climate Change, Agriculture, and Food Security, chaired by Senior Professor Buddhi Marambe; (02), Nutraceuticals and Lead Medical Compounds from Endemic Bio Resources, Chaired by Senior Professor, Sirimali Fernando; (03), Renewable Energy, Green Hydrogen, and Energy Storages, Chaired by Senior Professor, Ajith De Alwis; (04), Natural Resources and Minerals, Chaired by Dr. R.D. Gunaratne. Furthermore, the conference will have a formal inauguration and a closing session, with His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka expected to be the chief guest and H.E. the United States Ambassador for Sri Lanka, as well as H.E. the Indian High Commission for Sri Lanka, as special guests by invitation of the Hon. Minister, respectively. The event is also expected to be attended by the diplomats of 12 countries, including Australia, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, and the UK; senior cabinet secretaries; and nearly 200 senior delegates from academia, science, technology, innovation, the private sector, the media, and other policy domains.

Two other world-renowned Sri Lankan expatriate scientists, Physicist Senior Professor (Dr.) Siva Sivanthan, a White House Genius Award Winner from the Chicago Laboratories, USA, and Engineer Senior Professor (Dr.) Gehan Amaratunga, an energy expert from the University of Cambridge, are also invited to give the keynote speeches on the first and second days, respectively. The event will also serve as a springboard for encouraging Sri Lankan expatriate scientists' engagement in the country's advancement.

In order to advance them to the level of policy decisions and help the economy grow in terms of the contributions made by the science and technology sectors, it is anticipated that the scientific community will present H.E. the president of Sri Lanka with a number of policy recommendations in the four aforementioned thematic areas during the event's closing session.

As a post-BICOST activity for the cabinet submission, these policy recommendations are anticipated to pave the way for the creation of a set of medium-term STI implementation strategies (2024–2030). The NASTEC is expected to play a significant role in overseeing the



implementation of these recommendations under the direction of the subject ministry of science and technology in consultation with the Department of National Planning.

Past Conferences with respective themes:

- 2020 BICOST IX Postponed due to pandemic situation
- 2018 BICOST IX Science, Technology, Innovation and Commercialization for Sustainable Development (Postponed to be held in 2020)
- 2016 BICOST VIII Formation of Strategies for the implementation of National Research and Development Framework
- 2014 BICOST VII National Research and Development Investment Framework for 2015-2020
- 2010 BICOST VI Planning for Economic Growth through Science and Technology
- 2008 BICOST V National Science and Technology Policy for Sri Lanka
- 2006 BICOST IV A Road Map for the Review of S&T in Sri Lanka
- 2004 BICOST III S&T Strategy for National Development
- 2002 BICOST II Science and Technology in Infrastructure Development
- 2000 BICOST I the Roles of Science and Technology in National Development

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