

BIODIVERSITY SRI LANKA - HIGHLIGHTS OF 2018

The Sri Lanka Business and Biodiversity Platform was rebranded as [Biodiversity Sri Lanka](#) (BSL) after its formal registration in October 2015 as a Not-for-profit Company Limited by Guarantee under the Sri Lanka Companies Ordinance. Established to promote dialogue and improve the exchange of knowledge, information and best practices on biodiversity conservation, BSL boasts of [35 Patron Members](#), [38 General Members](#), [2 Associate Members](#) and [3 SME Members](#) to date. The governance of the initiative is through a [9 member Board of Directors and a Secretariat](#) housed at the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce – one of the oldest Chambers in the Asia region.

Efforts in 2018 have been centered on integrating the work of BSL with national biodiversity priorities, as governed by the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP) (2016-2022) and the Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2016 - 2025), together with fostering better relations with the Government of Sri Lanka as required by the CBD. To this end, as a major stride forward, in September 2018, [BSL signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Sri Lanka through its Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment](#), to use the combined comparative advantages of the two organizations for more substantive influences in the policy arena, for incorporating best practices and standards for biodiversity conservation in the country. Through this MoU, BSL has been appointed as the nationally recognized business and biodiversity initiative, to cater to the relevant obligations as set out by the CBD.

Building public-private partnerships has stood in the forefront of BSL's work throughout the year. In February 2018, as a landmark initiative, [BSL launched a multi-partner ecosystem restoration project](#) in collaboration with the Forest Department and IUCN Sri Lanka as its chief technical partner, in a degraded land area of 10ha within the Kanneliya Forest Reserve in Sri Lanka's wet zone. Working through scientific principles of ecological restoration, this multi-partner private-public initiative is the first of its kind in the country and is expected to be seen as a model, driving conservation towards the future. As a significant segment of this initiative, robust ecological monitoring, tracking progress made with the restoration, will set the stage for the establishment of a corporate biodiversity register and the design of a Biodiversity Credit Accrual System – the first of its kind in Asia, for acceptance by the Government of Sri Lanka.

[FOCUS-LK 2018](#) – another such collaborative initiative will spearhead sustainable use and management of coastal and marine resources to enhance the blue economy in Sri Lanka. This multi-partner initiative, brought together, the Embassy of France to Sri Lanka and the Maldives and multiple stakeholders representing the government, non-government and academic sectors, with 6 private sector companies expressing interest to work towards a common goal in marine and coastal conservation in the East Coast of Sri Lanka. These initiatives and their success is expected to encourage many more such partnerships which are seen as the only way where impactful conservation can be achieved of the country's valuable biodiversity and ecosystems.

In order to successfully implement the current NBSAP, addressing barriers has become critically important. Based on a recent study undertaken by BSL, its members have been engaged in over 290 initiatives within the period 2010-2018, that can be linked to the NBSAP targets. As an important and ongoing activity, BSL will continue to document these linkages and identify gaps in implementation, so that members can be directed to work in areas where gaps exist. BSL will also act as a repository to store this information, so that the Government can easily identify private sector contributions towards NBSAP implementation.

In our quest to raise much needed awareness on climate change and the disasters and dangers as well as the opportunities it will most certainly bring to our country, BSL worked continuously on a [series of events and programmes](#) that will form a practical dialogue amongst State, private sector, academia and NGOs to assess the extent of the changing climate, its impacts on individuals, small, medium and large enterprises and possible responses and opportunities. Bureaucratic inertia, lack of awareness, obstructing vested interests, lack of serious political commitment and lack of funds have stood in the way of the plan coming to life. Thus BSL is now directing its efforts to guide its member companies in climate change adaptation strategies and in investing in the National Adaptation Plan.

In an attempt to heighten the importance given to environmental/biodiversity-related activities by Sri Lanka's private sector, and in order to recognize and appreciate the positive work being carried out by companies, to support national priorities as set out by the Government of Sri Lanka and the various conventions and agreements the country has pledged allegiance to, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants - Sri Lanka and BSL are collaborating in a first ever joint award for excellence in environmental/biodiversity project implementation.

BSL is extending further support to the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, by facilitating industrial placements for the students from among its member companies to follow a twelve credit course on industrial training. This is a full time placement where the students are expected to work within a private sector organization that has significant involvement with environmental activities in their programme of work. The credits from this training contributes to the final academic grade.

To learn more about the work that BSL does to fulfill its objectives in mainstreaming biodiversity within the core business of companies through advocacy, networking, capacity building and conservation action support, log onto www.biodiversitysrilanka.org or write to info@biodiversitysrilanka.org.