

## Message from Chairman of the Organising Committee



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The first locally transmitted COVID-19 patient in Sri Lanka was reported on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and since then the government has been taking a number of pandemic monitoring and preventive measures diligently, to minimise the adverse impact of this deadly virus on the society and economy of the country. With a population of about 21.5 million, Sri Lanka recorded only 960 confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus with nine deaths being reported during the first wave. The collective efforts of relevant authorities and the public in containing the first wave, helped Sri Lanka gain international recognition as a country, which was able to successfully control this global pandemic.

The success achieved during first wave could be attributed to the past experiences which Sri Lanka had gained in handling numerous communicable and non-communicable diseases and also a well-coordinated public health surveillance system, which has proven to be vital in facing the challenges posed by this global pandemic. Similar to many other countries across the world, Sri Lanka at present is experiencing the second wave of Covid-19 which spread rapidly but is now being contained to a greater extent.

Considering the success attained and failures encountered during the entire process of battling this pandemic, it is important to have a discourse on the whole system to identify the lapses, gaps in policies, dimensions on public understanding, attitude and literacy on infectious diseases, deficiencies in research and innovation, in order to make the system more efficient and effective in facing the current COVID-19 and similar future pandemic situations.

Accordingly, as the premier national organisation in Science and Technology established in May 1968, the National Science Foundation (NSF) decided to organise this timely national conference on “COVID-19: Impact, Mitigation, Opportunities and Building Resilience” with the main emphasis being on moving from “adversity to serendipity”. The scope of the conference encompasses a wide range of disciplines such as health, psychology, environment, economy, society, innovation and research. Around 90 research papers on the aforementioned disciplines are presented by researchers, which paves the way for the creation of a policy dialogue on this timely topic of national importance. The interactive sessions will help to identify gaps in current strategies, propose new policies and interventions in the form of a policy paper, which is needed to safeguard the Sri Lankan community from any future global pandemics in a proactive manner. This conference will be an event setting the stage for an interactive dialogue in sharing the experiences of experts in the field of health, economy, environment, resilience building and governance, which helps Sri Lanka to transit to a “new normal”. I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all the professionals and academics who contributed to the success of this national conference.