

## Message from His Excellency the President of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka



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இலங்கை சனாதிபதி  
President of Sri Lanka

The world has been severely impacted since COVID-19 struck humanity about a year ago, which has shown no respect for race, religion, wealth, social status or geographical location. In fact, according to global statistics, infection and fatality rates have been higher in the ‘developed’ countries in North America and Western Europe, than in the ‘developing’ countries of Asia and Africa.

While the current pandemic is disruptive and destructive, many opportunities are emerging through it which ought to be seized and harnessed for the benefits of humanity. Sri Lanka is a resilient nation; we have conquered a 30-year conflict and built back better after the tsunami in 2004. In this decisive hour, we need to respond to change and this situation should be used as an opportunity and a launching pad to leapfrog to development through a resilient, agile and pragmatic response.

In the circumstances, it is commendable that the National Science Foundation has taken the initiative to organize a National Conference on COVID-19 under the theme “From Adversity to Serendipity” bringing together all stake holders under one roof to deliberate and reflect on high priority economic and social issues in a holistic manner through a trans-disciplinary approach to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on the economy and the people of Sri Lanka and build back better.

I wish this conference all the success and hope that recommendations emanating from it will lead to strategic and actionable outputs and outcomes to contain the pandemic and build a robust and resilient community and economy in Sri Lanka.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa