

Institute of National Security Studies

Colombo Conclave 2021: International Dimensions on National Security

Press Release

Institute of National Security Studies (INSS), the premier think tank on national security, established under the Ministry of Defence, Sri Lanka conducted its second national conference “Colombo Conclave 2021”, under the theme of “International Dimensions on National Security”, on 24th of November 2021 from 0800hrs to 1800hrs at Waters Edge, Battaramulla. The event comprised of three main sessions, bringing 12 senior experts around the country to share their perspectives on three thematic areas. After displaying a short documentary about the institution, the welcome address was delivered by the Director General of the Institute of National Security Studies, Professor Rohan Gunaratna followed by a speech by the Chief Guest, General Kamal Gunaratna (Retd.) WWV RWP RSP USP ndc psc MPhil, Secretary, Ministry of Defence and the State Ministry of National Security and Disaster Management after launching of the new logo of the INSS.

The first session was titled as, “Human Rights: Implications and Interpretations”, which was moderated by Ambassador Bernard Goonethilleke, Chairman, Pathfinder Foundation. During this session he highlighted that, it was the government’s responsibility to ensure that there is a proper mechanism to deal with human rights regulations. The first speaker was Dr. Prathiba Mahanamahewa, Attorney at Law, Arbitrator, Sri Lanka and Jamaica, Rector, Sri Palee Campus, University of Colombo. He urged that the international community is more concerned about Sri Lanka’s human rights violations rather than human rights protection. Dr. Thesara Jayawardene, Head, Department of Industrial Management, University of Moratuwa, presented an illustrious presentation on, “Human Rights Violations and Double Standards”. She appraised the audience stating that there is no hierarchy in human rights and there should be no discrimination. Mr. Malinda Seneviratne, Senior Political Analyst, was the third speaker of the first session. He presented on the topic of “Politicization of Human Rights”

The second session was titled as “Political Division of ‘North and South’ on Issues of Human Rights”, which was moderated by Ambassador HMGS Palihakkara, Former Foreign Secretary, where he stressed that human rights cannot be separated from politics. Additional Solicitor General Nerin Pulle, President’s Counsel Attorney General’s Department, stated that, “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter”, which generated a significant amount of discussion in the second session. Dr. Maneesha S Wanasinghe Pasqual, Head of the Department of International Relations, University of Colombo, conducted her discussion on the topic “Use of Human Rights in Subjugating Developing States”, She pointed out that as a developing nation, Sri Lanka’s voice on human rights, is silent in front of developed nations. The final speaker of

the second session, Ambassador A.M.J. Sadiq, Additional Secretary, Bilateral Affairs (West), Foreign Ministry, further extended his thoughts on threat of targeted sanctions.

The final session was on “Achieving Sustainable Peace and Stability”, which was a thought provoking session, and was moderated by Admiral Professor Jayanath Colombage RSP VSV USP FNI rcds psc Secretary, Foreign Ministry. Ms. Chamindry Saparamadu, Director General of Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka, General Daya Rathnayake (Retd.) WWV RWP RSP VSV USP ndu psc Secretary, Ministry of Industry and Commerce and, Ms. Jeevanthie Senanayake Senior Assistant Secretary to the President were the three speakers of the final session. The session covered the areas of detrimental effects of forced reconciliation, emergence of sustainable reconciliation within the society and the role of military in safeguarding sustainable peace respectively.

Each session was followed by an insightful Q and A session, which generated a great interaction between the panelists and the audience. INSS awarded tokens of appreciation paying its gratitude to the panelists, for their immense contribution to the conference.

Final remarks of the conference were delivered by Professor Rohan Gunaratna. Rear Admiral Dimuthu Gunwardena, RWP and two bar, RSP, VSV, USP, nswc, psc, hdmc Director (Communications and Publications), of INSS delivered the vote of thanks. The conference closure anticipated another edition in the forthcoming year.