

Sri Lanka Participates in the 114th International Labour Conference

The 114th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1 to 12 June 2026. An eleven-member Sri Lankan delegation, comprising representatives of the Government, employers, and trade unions, participated in the Conference under the leadership of Hon. (Dr.) Anil Jayantha Fernando, Minister of Labour.

One of the key highlights of this year's Conference was the adoption of a new international labour standard on Decent Work in the Platform Economy. Sri Lanka voted in favour of the adoption of the Convention. The Convention is the first international labour standard specifically designed to protect platform workers and promote decent work in the platform economy. It addresses important issues including social security, occupational safety and health, labour rights, and working conditions. The Convention is expected to serve as an important guide for future policy and legislative developments relating to platform workers.

Addressing the Plenary Session of the Conference, Hon. Anil Jayantha Fernando highlighted the growing importance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emphasized the need to harness its benefits in an inclusive manner. He stressed the importance of reducing the AI divide both among countries and within societies to ensure that the benefits of technological advancement are shared by all.

On the sidelines of the Conference, the Minister engaged in a series of bilateral meetings and high-level discussions aimed at strengthening international cooperation in labour and employment matters.

Meeting with the Director-General of the ILO

On 08 June 2026, Hon. Minister Anil Jayantha Fernando paid a courtesy call on Mr. Gilbert F. Hougbo, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

During the meeting, the Minister briefed the Director-General on the wide range of initiatives, policy measures, and reforms being undertaken by the Government of Sri Lanka to strengthen labour legislation and social security protection. He also sought the continued technical assistance and support of the ILO in advancing these reforms.

The Minister highlighted Sri Lanka's recent ratification of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and informed the Director-General that steps are being taken to introduce the necessary legal provisions for its implementation. He further noted that Sri Lanka is considering the ratification of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), with a view to promoting decent work and strengthening protections for workers in the fisheries sector.

Mr. Hougbo commended Sri Lanka's commitment to advancing international labour standards and welcomed the country's recent ratification of Convention No. 190. He assured the Minister of the ILO's continued technical assistance and support for Sri Lanka's labour and social protection reform agenda.

Asia-Pacific Labour Ministers' Meeting

On 9 June 2026, Hon. Anil Jayantha Fernando participated in the Asia-Pacific Labour Ministers' Meeting held on the sidelines of the International Labour Conference. More than fifteen Labour Ministers attended the meeting and emphasized the importance of collectively addressing common labour and employment challenges faced by countries in the region.

During his intervention, the Minister underscored the importance of regional cooperation and collective action in addressing shared challenges and ensuring sustainable solutions. He also highlighted Sri Lanka's recent efforts to strengthen labour standards, including the ratification of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190).

The Minister also held discussions with Labour Ministers from other countries and explored opportunities for future cooperation in the labour sector.

Bilateral Meeting with the United Arab Emirates

On 9 June 2026, Hon. Minister Anil Jayantha Fernando held a bilateral meeting with H.E. Dr. Abdulrahman Al Awar, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation of the United Arab Emirates.

The discussions focused on strengthening cooperation between the two countries, particularly in relation to the protection and welfare of migrant workers. The UAE side expressed its readiness to welcome more Sri Lankan workers in various sectors, including hospitality.

Bilateral Meeting with the Hon. Shobha Karandlaje, Minister of State for Labour and Employment of India

On 10 June 2026, Hon. Anil Jayantha Fernando held a bilateral meeting with Hon. Shobha Karandlaje, Minister of State for Labour and Employment of India, on the sidelines of the International Labour Conference (ILC).

The discussion focused on strengthening cooperation between Sri Lanka and India, particularly in the area of labour law reforms and knowledge sharing. Hon. Anil Jayantha Fernando briefed the Indian delegation on Sri Lanka's ongoing labour law review process and emphasized the importance of maintaining a transparent and consultative approach involving all stakeholders.

The Indian side shared its experience in undertaking labour law reforms, including the consolidation of labour legislation into four Labour Codes, and expressed its willingness to provide technical assistance and share expertise with Sri Lanka. Both sides agreed to continue engagement and cooperation in this area through further technical discussions and exchanges between the relevant authorities.

The list of the ILC Delegates:

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| 1. Hon. A. Anil Jayantha Fernando | -Minister of Labour |
| 2. Hon. S. P. S. M. Jayasinghe | -Deputy Minister of Labour |
| 3. Mr. S. M. Piyatissa | -Secretary, Ministry of Labour |
| 4. Mr. B. Vasanthan | -Senior Assistant Secretary (Labour and Foreign Relations), Ministry of Labour |

5. Mrs. D. N. K. Wataliyadda

6. Mr. J. M. P. Karunarathna

7. Mr. V. L. B. Ellepola

8. Mr. L. S. Devendra

9. Mr. Vadivelu Suresh

10. Mr. A. A. Janaka Adikari

11. Mr. M. M. L. Ranjan Perera

-Commissioner General of Labour,
Department of Labour

-Additional Commissioner General of
Labour, Department of Labour

-Director General, The Employers'
Federation of Ceylon

- General Secretary, Sri Lanka Nidahas
Sewaka Sangamaya

- General Secretary, Lanka Jathika
Estate Workers Union

- General Secretary, Inter Company
Employees Union

-General Secretary,
National Union of Seafarer Sri Lanka

