



“ICC also can play a special role in connecting business to the World”

Speech Delivered by the newly elected Chairman Dinesh Weerakkody of the International Chamber of Commerce Sri Lanka at the 51 st AGM of the Chamber. ICC Sri Lanka is an affiliate of the International Chamber of Commerce, the largest, most representative business organization in the world. Its hundreds of thousands of member companies in over 130 countries have interests spanning every sector of private enterprise.

100 years ago Henry Ford, the father of the Auto industry said;

Coming together is a beginning;
keeping together is progress;
working together is success.

100 years after, where are we as a World? Are we ready to make a change, at least now?

On behalf of the International Chamber of Commerce, let me say thank you- to our outgoing president Keerthi for his tireless advocacy for business, and for free enterprise, in Sri Lanka. Would you all join me in putting our hands together to show our appreciation for our outgoing president.

It's an honor for me to be elected the 7th Chairman of the International Chamber of Commerce Sri Lanka, a branch, of the largest business Chamber in the world, the leading voice for global industry for more than 130 years, and to also have the privilege to address you this evening. Incidentally, this is the second time a current or a former Chairman of Commercial Bank of Ceylon has become Chairman, of ICC Sri Lanka. The previous being a Lions international President Mahendra Amerasuriya.

Ladies and Gentleman

For a country or a business to prosper good governance is a must, I have all my life been a champion of good governance, and of free enterprise.

But I'm here today with a very specific message, to all of those who are gathered here:

firstly, Sri Lankan businesses recognize that investing in Sri Lanka means investing in success -- for you and for all of us.

Secondly, Creating Employment for our people is at the heart of our economic, social and community well-being.

In the competitive world we live in, business cannot afford to be complacent; we must focus on economic growth, which in turn leads to employment opportunities and improved social and community well-being.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Our Country has many Challenges today, that we collectively need to address ; for example;

1. the quality and caliber of our workforce,
2. debt servicing that is beyond our annual foreign income
3. And divisions between ethnic groups that needs desperate healing

Despite all that, Sri Lanka has a tremendous opportunity for growth and progress. However as a Business Chamber there are significant issues to be discussed behind closed doors with the government – in trade, regulatory, tax reform, governance and so on – but let me make one thing clear.

The theme that runs through all of this is that free enterprise and good governance is part of the solution to Most of our problems, and it is about time, our politicians realize that- and businesses stop complaining, roll up its sleeve and work with all of Sri Lanka – to make sure that we all prosper.

As Business people we have a responsibility.

We shouldn't declare victory if stock prices are up.

We shouldn't declare victory if the cost of getting our way, leads to people who are less well off.

We shouldn't declare victory if our members are driving bigger cars on streets that are crumbling.

We need to rise together, not rise above, and that means many of us in the business community, will have to hold ourselves, to higher standards.

The good news is that, if we do, our share to change the political and business culture in the country, we will prosper immensely in a more prosperous Sri Lanka.

In Conclusion, let me on behalf of the ICC, say thank you to all of the companies that are represented here, and for your businesses playing such an important role in the prosperity of our country.

As I said before every one in this room has a role to play in the prosperity of our Country – to make our country the best place in Asia to work, live and visit. ICC stands ready to work together, hand in Hand.

ICC also can play a special role in connecting business to the World, and with a Sri Lankan version of a World Economic Forum on the cards in 2018. ICC can certainly open new doors for Sri Lankan Business.

Thank you once again for being with us today despite many other events. Have a great evening.