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AmCham Sri Lanka CEO Forum 2026 Concludes Successfully with Strong Call for Reform, Resilience and Regional Collaboration

Colombo, Sri Lanka – 27 February 2026

The American Chamber of Commerce in Sri Lanka (AmCham SL) successfully concluded its flagship **CEO Forum 2026** on the 25th February 2026, held under the theme “*Accelerating Sri Lanka’s Rebuild.*” The Forum brought together over 200 C-level executives, policymakers, development partners, and global thought leaders, reaffirming its position as one of Sri Lanka’s most influential leadership platforms.

With overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, the Forum delivered a full day of strategic dialogue focused on restoring economic confidence, advancing reform, strengthening sustainability, supporting SMEs, enhancing public-private collaboration, and embedding inclusive leadership into corporate and national decision-making.

The Forum commenced with an inspiring opening keynote address by Jayne Howell, Chargé d’Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka, who underscored the importance of private-sector leadership in Sri Lanka’s recovery and called for expanding strong, fair two-way trade between the United States and Sri Lanka. She highlighted opportunities to increase Sri Lankan purchases of high-quality American goods, technology, and energy solutions, and emphasized that growth in trade and logistics — including through the continued expansion of the Port of Colombo — strengthens supply chains, supports jobs, and drives economic growth in both countries. She also encouraged deeper commercial engagement, including participation in initiatives such as the SelectUSA Investment summit.

A Bold Economic Vision: Targeting 7% Growth and a \$200 Billion Economy

In the keynote by Dr. Harsha Suriyapperuma, Secretary to the Treasury, Ministry of Finance and the Panel 01 on A New Chapter for Sri Lanka: Restoring Economic Confidence Through Reform, Resilience & International Engagement, outlined Sri Lanka’s ambition to achieve 7% annual economic growth, with the long-term objective of doubling the economy within a decade and progressing toward a LKR. 200 billion economic milestone.

Key reform priorities highlighted included:

- Strengthening fiscal stability and maintaining inflation at approximately 5%
- Improving governance and regulatory clarity to attract foreign direct investment
- Upgrading infrastructure and enhancing logistics capabilities, particularly in ports
- Supporting the growth of IT, pharmaceuticals, and high-value export sectors
- Accelerating digitization and transforming the informal economy
- Consolidating the banking sector to enhance financial resilience

The discussions underscored the government's commitment to creating a more predictable and investor-friendly business environment, positioning Sri Lanka as a competitive regional hub.

Climate Risk, Energy Transition and ESG Integration

Panel 02 titled The Cost of Climate Change: Understanding Environmental Risks to Sri Lanka's Economic Future, examined the economic risks of climate change, emphasizing its impact on supply chains, public health, and evolving market demands.

The panelists stressed the urgent need for:

- Sustainable financing mechanisms
- Greater transparency in ESG reporting
- National planning and governance to guide energy transition

Sri Lanka's target to generate 70% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030 was discussed, alongside practical challenges including fuel quality, battery storage costs, and grid modernization. The panel also emphasized integrating ESG principles into technology strategies and accelerating digital transformation to improve climate resilience.

Regional collaboration across Asia-Pacific economies was highlighted as essential to managing shared climate risks and advancing sustainable growth.

Strengthening SME Ecosystems and Expanding Access to Finance

A recurring theme across multiple panels was the need to strengthen Sri Lanka's SME sector, which currently faces limited access to credit — with only 20% of financial sector credit accessible to SMEs.

The Deputy Minister of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development, Hon. Chathuranga Abeysinghe's keynote outlined transformative policy initiatives, including the establishment of the Industrial Transformation and Innovation Agency (ITIA). This new body will integrate industrial transformation with entrepreneurship development to create a more cohesive ecosystem.

Key announcements included:

- A LKR. 300 million capacity-building investment
- The launch of the “Level Up” program, targeting support for 6,000 SMEs
- LKR. 95 million in funding allocation for SME advancement
- Simplified business registration processes
- Expanded financial literacy programs
- Improved access to equity financing

Panel 03 on Unlocking Opportunity in Uncertainty: How SMEs Can Navigate Crises & Compete in a Changing Market, discussed and reinforced that SME resilience will be central to Sri Lanka's broader economic recovery strategy.

Global Engagement and U.S. Investment Opportunities

Carey Arun, the Principal Commercial Officer, U.S. Commercial Service, U.S. Consulate General Chennai provided insights into the advantages of investing in the United States and the role of the U.S. government in facilitating foreign investments. She invited interested Sri Lankan companies to participate in the annual SelectUSA Investment Summit, to be held outside Washington, D.C., from May 3–6, 2026, noting that it offers:

- Comprehensive market-entry resources
- Direct networking with state-level economic representatives
- Startup pitching competitions
- Individual investment counseling services

The discussion reinforced the importance of bilateral commercial ties and cross-border investment flows between Sri Lanka and the United States.

April Palmerlee, CEO, American Chamber of Commerce in Australia and the Chairman, AmChams of Asia Pacific, emphasized the importance of deeper collaboration and alignment among business leaders across the Asia-Pacific region.

She highlighted AmCham’s critical role in bridging policy intent with business impact, particularly in an environment shaped by evolving U.S. trade policies and strategic competition. Evidence-based advocacy and practical, solutions-oriented engagement were identified as key to navigating today’s complex economic landscape.

Inclusive Leadership: Embedding Women’s Perspectives in Decision-Making

The Forum’s special Fireside Chat focused on diversity and inclusion in leadership, both in national and corporate decision making, underscoring both the economic and social value of gender diversity.

Key insights included:

- 77% of Sri Lankan women lack access to leadership training
- The need to move beyond token representation toward systemic change
- Eliminating structural barriers and “gender boxes” in recruitment and promotion
- Creating respectful workplace cultures
- Addressing the influence of digital media on societal attitudes

The speakers, Dr. Sulochana Segeera, Chairperson & Founder, Women in Management and Anam Omar, Managing Director, Phoenix Industries stressed that embedding women’s perspectives into corporate and national decision-making is not only a social imperative but a strategic advantage for long-term economic success.

A Platform for Dialogue, Insight and Action

The CEO Forum 2026 reaffirmed AmCham Sri Lanka’s role as a trusted platform for public–private dialogue. More than a conference, the Forum served as a space where policy direction met private sector experience, fostering practical discussions on reform, resilience, sustainability, and inclusive growth.

As Sri Lanka continues its rebuilding journey, the Forum underscored the importance of collaboration between government, business, development partners, and international stakeholders.

With strong attendance, dynamic discussions, and highly positive feedback from participants, the AmCham SL CEO Forum 2026 stands as a significant milestone in shaping Sri Lanka’s economic future.

The AmCham Sri Lanka CEO Forum 2026 was made possible through the generous support of its valued partners. Hatton National Bank (HNB) came on board as the Title Sponsor, with Starlink by Singer as the Gold Sponsor. Barista supported the Forum as the Coffee Partner, while Carmart served as the Mobility Partner and LinearSix as the Gifting Partner. Good PR supported the event as the PR Partner, and Emojot enhanced engagement as the AI-Experience Partner.

About AmCham Sri Lanka

The American Chamber of Commerce in Sri Lanka (AmCham SL) is dedicated to promoting trade, investment, and economic cooperation between Sri Lanka and the United States. Through advocacy, dialogue, and strategic engagement, AmCham SL serves as a bridge between policymakers and the private sector.

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