



POSITION PAPER

IN VIEW OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS – 05.08.2020

Number of Electors in the Electoral Roll	16,263,874
Number of Electors in the Supplementary Register	11
Grand Total	16,263,885

(Revision of Electoral Register 2019)

INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka has a long tradition of democratic civilian rule with Presidential and Parliamentary Elections being held according to a schedule. Recognizing that the people of Sri Lanka have successfully exercised their franchise at regular intervals including the recently concluded Presidential Elections and are again to exercise this right in the forthcoming Parliamentary Elections, we as a collective group have considered the contextual situation at this crucial time.

This period is being overshadowed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that threatens not only our country but the entire world. For us Sri Lankans, this period will no doubt evoke memories of the disastrous Easter Sunday Bomb Blast of April 2019 and the terrible suffering that so many families experienced. While those affected and all of us need to grieve, heal and mourn in solidarity, let us together renew our determination to rise above sectarian differences and continue our efforts towards building an inclusive society at peace with itself.

We sincerely hope that the forthcoming parliamentary elections will herald the beginning of an era of good governance ensuring a healthy balance between the Legislature, Judiciary and Executive.

NATIONAL ISSUES & COMMITMENT:

Our recent reflections focusing on various dimensions of the prevalent political culture as well as on a range of social and economic issues faced by the people of this country, we believe that the following issues require urgent attention:

01. Commitment to impartially execute Legal Action through immediate judicial processes against Politicians, State and Private Institutions that are involved in bribery and corruption and establish an Independent Judiciary supported by a culture of justice and transparency and ensure equity and equality before the law (Justice for the Easter Sunday Attack).
02. Drafting changes to the Constitution with the inclusion of appropriate decentralized power structures in consultation with all stakeholders will ensure the durability of the Constitution and to fulfill the aspirations of all communities and ensure ethnic and religious harmony.
03. Concrete action to attend to issues related to ethnic and religious conflicts as well as concerns on Missing Persons, Illegal Occupation of Private Lands and Enforced Disappearances.
04. Ensure that the Presidential Task Forces established to resolve pressing national issues, follow due process as outlined in the Constitution and fulfill their tasks to the satisfaction of all communities in Sri Lanka.
05. Development and implementation of viable National Economic Policy taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals in consultation with independent professionals to ensure growth with equity without incurring excessive debt and dependence on foreign capital for longer than necessary to safeguard the country's sovereignty and independence.
06. Introduction of better Governance practices in all State and Private Institutions with proper monitoring mechanisms to ensure clean administration and enforcement of Law and Order in the country at all times.
07. Implement National Policies to ensure the Rights and Aspirations of the farming, fisheries and plantation communities and provide solutions to their burning issues such as lack of marketing facilities, right price for products, protection from natural disasters, excessive debt incurred through micro finance institutions, poverty, climate change and environmental issues, unemployment and decent wages.
08. Ensure a safe, secure life for persons with disabilities, widows and elders in care institutions and address their low living standards including access to basic facilities and right to decent wages and employment.
09. While safeguarding and enhancing the Free Medical Care and Free Education systems: increase opportunities for more students who qualify for University entrance to enter State Universities whilst ensuring the quality standards of State Universities are at par with International standards. Space for the functioning of private universities under a proper regulatory framework will help more students to obtain higher academical qualifications at an affordable cost.
10. Ensuring the rights of the Migrants throughout the migration cycle (departure, in service and return). Mechanism to eliminate fraudulent practices in the migration sector such as Trafficking in Persons, bondage, exploitation, physical and mental harassment, sexual abuse and child labour, by closely monitoring the activities of agencies and sub-agents.

CONCLUSION:

This Position Paper is to enlighten mainly the general public on the vital importance and obligation as citizens of the country to use the universal franchise and to guide them on their independent choice in the selection of a candidate to vote.

01. The people of this country must be empowered to demand an immediate change from this seemingly endless chain of crisis upon crisis.
02. A strong, sustainable people's movement is needed which will bring together citizens from all walks of life regardless of ethnic and religious identity or political affiliation.
03. Strong and sustainable people's movements requiring a high degree of political accountability and transparency and allowed to function for the welfare and best interests of the people and of the country at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

01. Creating a renewed awareness among the people, especially the youth, about the power of the ballot as a means to bring about peaceful, democratic and meaningful change.
02. Educating voters on the present electoral laws and voting systems and the need to elect suitable candidates who value and respect the distinct roles of the executive, legislature and judiciary.
03. Conscientizing voters to ensure that they elect exemplary men and women of unblemished character as their future leaders, and particularly highlighting the attributes to be expected of a candidate – namely, political maturity, thirst for justice and peace, commitment to good governance, respect for human rights and equality, concern for the poor and the downtrodden, determination to foster the people's well-being and best interests and sovereignty of the country, respecting and preserving the cultural and religious values over and above protecting party or personal interests.
04. Candidates should refrain from making hate speeches, limit criticism of other political parties or independent groups, expressions or behavior that would aggravate differences, hatred and tension between Sri Lankans of different religions, languages, races, customs and castes.
05. Enabling voters to maintain constant vigilance and prevail on the elected leaders to implement the actions spelt out in their election manifestos.
06. Striving to put in place suitable standard mechanisms to monitor compliance, accountability and transparency on the part of those in power.
07. Elect candidates with vision and foresight who have good understanding of contemporary global issues such as climate change and pandemics and their impact on the country and who are in a position to provide solutions to resolve them for the betterment of the present and future generations.
08. Ensure that educated and experienced professionals who can contribute meaningfully to the economic, political, social and cultural development of the country are appointed as the members of Parliament under the National List.



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