

# THE CATHOLIC NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



## THE CONSTITUTION

*Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC*  
(Social and Economic Development Centre)  
133, Kynsey Road,  
Colombo - 08.  
Sri Lanka.

## OUR VISION

“Realization of a Just Sri Lankan Society based on the Gospel Values of Love, Forgiveness, Peace, Unity and Equality-lived, promoted and protected irrespective of Caste, Creed and Nationality.”

## OUR MISSION

“Empowering people through animation and being in solidarity with their efforts for Integral Human Development.”

**REV. FR. MAHENDRA GUNATILLEKE**

National Director  
Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC  
133, Kynsey Road,  
Colombo 08,  
Sri Lanka.



11 JUN 2021

**ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CATHOLIC NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN TERMS OF SECTION 4(1) OF CATHOLIC BISHOP CONFERENCE IN SRI LANKA (INCORPORATION) ACT NO. 17 OF 1983**

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka in pursuance of the powers vested under the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka (Incorporation) Act No. 17 of 1983 and acting under Section 4 of the said Act do hereby establish **CATHOLIC NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT** hereinafter referred to as the "Commission".

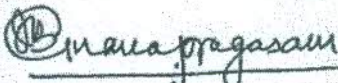
*(1) Establishment of the Commission*

The Commission shall comprise of nominees each nominated by the Bishop of each diocese of Sri Lanka and the chairman of the Commission shall be one of the Bishops nominated by the Catholic Bishops' Conference besides the diocesan nominees.

*(2) The powers of the Commission*

- (i) The COMMISSION shall be empowered to take all actions necessary to accomplish Justice, Peace and Human Development in consonance with the Catholic Christian principles in accordance with the general objects as enumerated in Section 3 of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka (Incorporation) Act No. 17 of 1983.
- (ii) The COMMISSION shall operate through its National Secretariat **CARITAS SRI LANKA -SEDEC** which is the coordinating body of the **DIOCESAN CARITAS** units.
- (iii) All legal rights, benefits and privileges vested upon and enjoyed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka shall also be vested upon and enjoyed by COMMISSION, CARITAS SRI LANKA-SEDEC and the Diocesan units, (Seth Saviya) Caritas Anuradhapura, (USCOD) Caritas Badulla, (EHED) Caritas Batticaloa, (Janasaviya) Caritas Chilaw, (Seth Sarana) Caritas Colombo, (SED) Caritas Galle, (HUDEC) Caritas Jaffna, (SETIK) Caritas Kandy, (Janasetha) Caritas Kurunegala, (Seth Mini) Caritas Ratnapura, (Hudec) Caritas Vanni, (Valvuthayam) Caritas Mannar, (EHED) Caritas Trincomalee, of CARITAS SRI LANKA-SEDEC, in terms of Section 4(1) of the aforesaid Act.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I Most Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam, Vice President of the Catholic Bishop's Conference in Sri Lanka, and Chairman of Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC, who have been authorized and empowered to execute these presents on behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka placed the signature and affixed the common seal on this 28<sup>th</sup> day of May in the year 2021 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

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Most Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam  
Vice President of the Catholic Bishop's Conference in Sri Lanka &  
Chairman of Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC



PARLIAMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC  
SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF  
SRI LANKA

CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE IN  
SRI LANKA (*INCORPORATION*)  
ACT, No. 17 OF 1983

[CERTIFIED ON 29<sup>TH</sup> April, 1983]

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## No. 17 of 1983

CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE IN SRI LANKA  
(INCORPORATION)Act  
No. 17 of 1983.

AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE IN SRI LANKA.

[Commencement and Operation—29th April, 1983.]

Short title.

1. This Act may be cited as the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka (Incorporation) Act, No. 17 of 1983.

rights and privileges of the Catholics; and

Incorporation  
of the Catholic  
Bishops'  
Conference  
in Sri Lanka.

2. From and after the date of commencement of this Act, such and so many persons as now are members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka (hereinafter referred to as the "Conference") or shall hereinafter be admitted as members of the Corporation hereby constituted (hereinafter referred to as the Corporation) shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession, under the name and style of the "Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka" and by that name shall and may sue and be sued in all courts with full power and authority to have and to use a common seal and to change, alter and renew the same at its discretion.

(e) to undertake charitable and human development activities.

4. (1) It shall be lawful for the Corporation from time to time at any general meeting of the members and by a majority of the members present and voting to make such rules not inconsistent with this Act as the Conference may deem expedient according to the laws and usages of the Roman Catholic Church for the admission, withdrawal or expulsion of members, for the establishment of the Boards, Committees, Commissions and Centres and conduct of the duties of such Boards, Committees, Commissions and Centres and of the various officers, agents and servants of the Corporation, for the procedure to be followed in the transaction of business and otherwise generally for the management of the affairs of the Corporation and the accomplishment of its objects.

Objects.

3. The general objects of the Conference shall be—

- (a) to jointly exercise the pastoral office of the Bishops in Sri Lanka by promoting the religious betterment and welfare of the people entrusted to their care;
- (b) to foster more efficaciously works for the good of the religion;
- (c) to establish relations with other Bishops' Conferences especially those of neighbouring countries in matters of common interest;
- (d) to promote, foster and protect the interests of Catholicism and of the Catholics and to safeguard the

(2) Such rules when made may, at a like meeting, be altered, added to, amended or cancelled, by a majority of members present and voting.

5. All members of the Corporation shall at all times be subject to the rules for the time being of the Corporation.

Members  
of the  
Corporation  
subject to the  
rules.

6. The Corporation shall be able and capable in law to take and hold any property both movable and immovable which may become vested in it by virtue of any purchase, grant, gift, testamentary

Power of  
Corporation  
to hold  
property.

disposition or otherwise and all such property shall be held by the Corporation for the purposes of this Act and subject to the rules in force for the time being of the Corporation with full power to sell, mortgage, lease, exchange or otherwise dispose of the same.

Vesting of  
property

7. (1) On the coming into operation of this Act, all property of the Conference both movable and immovable whether held in the name of the Conference or in the name of any person or persons in trust for the Conference or for the benefit of any Seminary, Institution or Centre established or maintained by the Conference shall be and is hereby vested in the Corporation and such property together with all property hereafter to be acquired both movable and immovable and all subscriptions, donations, loans and other moneys received or to be received shall be held by the said Conference for the purposes of this Act and subject to the rules for the time being of the Corporation.

(2) Any instrument of conveyance, transfer or assignment executed by the Archbishop of Colombo or the Bishop of Galle or the Bishop of Kandy or the Bishop of Jaffna or the Bishop of Mannar or the Bishop of Trincomalee/Batticaloa or the Bishop of Chilaw or the Bishop of Anuradhapura or the Bishop of Badulla in

favour of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka of all the property movable or immovable which by reason of the incorporation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka becomes subject to the administration of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka, shall be deemed to be an instrument chargeable under Part I item 23(7) of Schedule A to the Stamp Ordinance.\*

8. Subject to the provisions of this Act and any other written law, the Corporation shall have the power to do, perform and execute all such acts, matters and things whatsoever as are necessary or desirable for the promotion or furtherance of the aims and objects of the Conference or any one of them including the power to open, operate and close bank accounts, to borrow or raise moneys with or without security, to receive or collect grants and donations, to invest its funds and to engage, employ and dismiss personnel required for the carrying out of the objects of the Conference.

General powers  
of the  
Corporation.

9. Nothing in this Act contained shall prejudice or affect the rights of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka or of any body politic or corporate or of any other persons except such as are mentioned in this Act and those claiming by, from or under them.

Saving of the  
rights of the  
Republic and  
others.

\* See also the Stamp Duty Act, No. 43 of 1982.

# 1. DESIGNATION: THE CATHOLIC NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

## 2. OBJECTIVES:

- 2.1 To be in solidarity with all peoples, bearing in mind their racial diversity and religio-cultural plurality, and very specially with the voiceless victims of injustice, in their struggle for a fuller humanity. (Mater et Magistra 98, Populorum Progressio 43, Gaudium et Spes 32, Justice in the World P.402, Puebla 1141).
- 2.2 To become a witness to justice (Justice in the World, P.399), and proclaim the Good News of God's Kingdom to the poor, freedom to the oppressed and joy to the afflicted and marginalized(cf. Luke 4/12, Justice in the World, introduction).
- 2.3 To act as a catalyst in keeping the Church and the Nation, alert to those areas and instances where injustices are rife and where continued social and economic exploitation have been instrumental in reducing people to inhuman conditions of living (L.G. 77,78).
- 2.4 To become a source of education at grass-root level (M.M. 195; Justice in the world 401), and an agent of collective and sustained action and reflection of the Christian Community, making people conscious and concerned about self-reliance, social justice, peoples participation and co-operation, so that they may be prepared and equipped to work for a better future in keeping with their own human dignity and destiny.
- 2.5 To engage in all operations relating to relief and rehabilitation, when and if necessary, and to promote integral human development which will ensure the transformation of society in terms of the Kingdom.
- 2.6 To study Justice and Peace issues in the light of the Gospel imperatives and the teachings of the Church, and disseminate



such teachings as widely as possible with a view to animating and inspiring social action, thereby promoting a more committed Christian life.

- 2.7 To provide the Diocesan Centres with the necessary tools for a critical social analysis of events and issues with the purpose of identifying the root causes of structural evil prevailing in society and to assist these centres in the formation of service oriented leaders.
- 2.8 To maintain correct relationship between the National Centre and its Diocesan Counterparts so as to safeguard the autonomy of the Diocesan Centres, while respecting principles of partnership.

### 3. NATIONAL CENTRE:

- 3.1 There shall be a National Centre designated as Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC (Social and Economic Development Centre), for the realization of the aims and objectives of the Catholic National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development.
- 3.2 The Director of the National Centre shall be appointed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka CBCSL for a period of three years co-terminus with the appointment of the office and of the CBCSL.
- 3.3 The Director of the National Centre shall submit an annual report of work and finances to the (CBCSL) duly approved by the National Commission.
- 3.4 Bank Accounts of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC will always be "Joint Accounts". Cheques for the disbursement of funds will be signed by two persons authorised by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka. Payments



which exceed Rs.200,000/= will be signed either by the Chairman or Vice Chairman and the Director of SEDEC.

#### 4. LANGUAGE STREAMS:

- 4.1 The National Commission shall conduct its affairs in the official language depending on the type of work carried out and in response to the specific needs of the respective communities being served.

#### 5. THE NATIONAL COMMISSION:

##### 5.1. MEMBERSHIP:

The National Commission shall comprise of the following members:

##### 5.1.1. EX OFFICIO:

- 5.1.1.1 The Chairman and Vice Chairman (both members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka and appointed by the said Conference.)
- 5.1.1.2. The Director of the Social and Economic Development Centre, who will also be the Executive Secretary of the Commission.
- 5.1.1.3. The Diocesan Directors appointed by their respective Bishops and two representatives from each diocese.
- 5.1.1.4. Two representatives from the National Centre.

5.1.2. OTHERS:

- 5.1.2.1. Two representatives from the Conference of Major Religious Superiors nominated by the said Conference.
- 5.1.2.2. One person of the Finance Committee as per 7.1.2.
- 5.1.2.3. One member from the Committee of Consultants as per 7.1.1.
- 5.1.2.4. One nominee from each of the following Catholic National Commissions:
  - (a) National Commission for Education, Catechetics and the Bible Apostolate.
  - (b) National Commission for Social Communications.
  - (c) National Commission for the Pastoral care of Migrants, Health care and Prisons.
- 5.1.2. All the members of the Commission shall serve for a period of three years co-terminus with the CBCSL.
- 5.1.4. Any vacancy during the above mentioned period shall be filled by the appropriate authority, but only till the end of that three year period.
- 5.1.5. All the appointments, other than those mentioned in 5.2. resignations, change of membership, filling of vacancies of ordinary members, must have the approval of the Chairman of the National Commission.

## 5.2. FUNCTIONS:

The National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development will be responsible for the following functions:

- 5.2.1.1. To lay down the policy of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC in respect of its diverse activities. Any change of policy shall be submitted for the approval of CBCSL.
- 5.2.1.2. To define and determine the framework necessary for the effective implementation of such policies both at National and Diocesan levels.
- 5.2.1.3. Approve rules relating to the proper function, tasks and services of the various bodies operating under the aegis of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC.
- 5.2.1.4. Create a Standing Committee of five consultants comprising of knowledgeable and experienced persons who would furnish the Commission with expert advice on areas that fall within the concerns of Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC as mentioned in 7.1.1.
- 5.2.1.5. Propose a panel of five or more competent persons out of which three persons will be appointed by the CBCSL to form the Finance Committee of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC as per 7.1.2. This Committee will be appointed by the CBCSL and function as a component of the National Commission as mentioned in 7.1.1.

**5.3. OFFICE BEARERS:**

5.3.1. The Commission will have the following office bearers:

5.3.1.1 Chairman and Vice-Chairman (Bishops) who will be nominated by the CBCSL for a period of three years.

5.3.1.2 The National Director who will be the head of the National Centre and its operations.

5.3.1.3 All office bearers shall hold office for a period of three years. Any office bearer elected to fill in a vacancy occurring during the three year period shall hold office only for the three year period of the commission as per no.8.

**6. THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT:**

**6.1. MEMBERSHIP:**

The Board of Management of the National Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development will comprise of the following members:

6.1.1. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Commission.

6.1.2. The Director of the Social and Economic Development Centre, who will be the Secretary of the Board.

6.1.3. The Diocesan Directors of the respective dioceses.



## 6.2. FUNCTIONS:

The Board of Management will assume the following functions and responsibilities to ensure the smooth running of the institution:

- 6.2.1. To re-evaluate the vision of the Justice, Peace and Human Development Apostolate as spelt out in the objectives of the Constitution.
- 6.2.2. To periodically refine the vision of the Social Apostolate to adequately respond to the signs of the times.
- 6.2.3. Propose to the National Commission amendments to the Constitution whenever necessary. The Commission will study the proposed amendments and submit them to the Bishops' Conference for its sanction and written approval.
- 6.2.4. To strategise and take whatever measures that may be deemed necessary to implement the decisions of the Commission at both national and diocesan levels through the respective diocesan structures.

## 7. STANDING COMMITTEES:

- 7.1. The National Commission for Justice Peace and Human Development will establish two committees to assist it in the pursuance of its goals and objectives. They are the following:

- d) The Financial year of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC shall be the period of 12 months commencing on the 1st day of April each year.
- e) Submit audited Accounts within 3 months after the end of Financial Year to the Catholic Bishops' Conference after scrutiny and due approval by the National Commission.

## 8. TERMS OF OFFICE:

- 8.1. The terms of office of the Commission shall coincide with the three year term of office of the office-bearers of the said Bishops' Conference.
- 8.2. The term of office of all members of the Board of Management of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC and of the Standing Committee, together with any member coopted or appointed ad interim, shall also coincide with the above term of office.

## 9. FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS:

- 9.1. The Commission will meet at least twice a year and whenever deemed necessary.
- 9.2. The Board of Management will hold its meetings once every three months or more frequently, as and when the need arises.
- 9.3. The Committee of Consultants will meet at intervals determined by the Chairman of the Commission or the Director of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC with the concurrence of the Chairman of the Commission.

- 9.4. The Finance Committee, convoked by the Director of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC at least three times a year.

10. ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS OF THE NATIONAL SECRETARIAT:

In pursuance of the Commission's goals and objectives, Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC shall engage in the following activities and operations.

- 10.1. Organize study sessions, both at professional and grass-root levels, with the purpose of continually researching into the root causes of poverty and the injustices resulting from such causes, and propose viable and alternate solutions to create and promote a human community where justice and peace would prevail.
- 10.2. Motivate priests, religious and laity to create Peoples' Organizations at the grass-roots. This is to be done through well organized study and training sessions based on the Social Doctrine of the Church.
- 10.3. Support the infrastructure of such organizations, through its publications, on-going training sessions, and the dissemination of information at diocesan and national levels.
- 10.4. Make available the necessary financial support, technical advice and competent personnel to assist the diocesan ventures in the above tasks.
- 10.5. Obtain aid and donation in the form of cash and equipment, or in any other approved form, and disburse same on such terms and conditions as the Commission may deem necessary for the furtherance of its objectives.

- 10.6. Process projects and approve them if they fall within the framework of the Commission's objectives, provide the necessary assistance for the implementation of such projects, and periodically monitor their progress.
- 10.7. Draw, make accept, endorse and discount cheques, notes and other negotiable instruments for the purpose of the activities of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC.
- 10.8. Surfacing major issues prevailing in the Country, entering into a critical and objective analysis of such issues and assessing their consequences.
- 10.9. Planning out courses of action with the intention of sensitising diverse groups of such issues.
- 10.10. Searching for possible ways and means of taking up the cause of minority groups whose voices are struggling to merge.
- 10.11. The Secretariat will place special emphasis on matters concerning Human Rights. Efforts will be made to educate Christians and non Christians as well, in the Church's position of Human Rights, and encourage concerned groups to stand in their defence.
- 10.12. Reporting of action programmes carried out at the National, Diocesan and grass-root levels.
- 10.13. The Secretariat will have as one of its vital tasks the publication of material on matters of Justice and Peace.
- 10.14. The Secretariat will also make concerned efforts to reach out to other groups, of similar interest, inspired by the Social Teachings of the Church.



- 10.15. All such transactions shall be endorsed and countersigned by the Director and one other person authorised to do so by the Chairman of the Commission.
11. The Director of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC will maintain an inventory of movable items belonging to the National Secretariat. It will also be his responsibility to update this inventory at regular intervals.
12. Any Amendment to this Constitution shall be effected only with the approval of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka.
13. This Constitution shall be valid for a period of six years from the date of approval.

*CBCSL approval: Plenary meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> August 2000.*