

Sri Lanka Celebrates World Habitat Day 2016 “Housing at the Centre” in Polonnaruwa District

3rd October 2016, Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka: World Habitat Day for 2016 was celebrated in Sri Lanka at a National event held in Polonnaruwa district in the North Central Province. His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena, the President of Sri Lanka was the Chief Guest at the celebrations. This important national event focussed on this year’s World Habitat Day theme, “Housing at the Centre”. The event, which drew the participation of over 2,000 community members, was organized by the Ministry of Housing and Construction. The highlight of the event was the opening of the *Sugaladevi Model Village* by His Excellency the President in Dimbulagala DS division in Polonnaruwa, comprising of 24 permanent houses with infrastructure facilities.



Sugaladevi model village.



His Excellency the President and the Hon. Minister of Housing and Construction handing over prizes.

At the opening ceremony, His Excellency the President stated that 2017 will be declared as "The Year for Alleviation of Poverty" in Sri Lanka and that the Government will give priority towards addressing housing issues in the country. The Minister of housing and construction stressed the importance of introducing environment friendly housing country-wide. He pledged to find solutions to the housing issues in Polonnaruwa district, commencing with 50 housing projects in 2017.

The Deputy Minister of Housing and Construction, the Hon. Indika Bandaranayake, Chief Minister of the North Central Province, Hon. Peshala Jayarathne, State Minister of Irrigation and Water Management, Hon. Wasantha Senanayake and the Country Programme Manager of the

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Mr Chanaka Talpahewa, also participated at the event. Representatives from key housing and urban sector agencies in Sri Lanka were also present.

Mr Chanaka Talpahewa sharing the UN-Habitat Executive Director’s message, stated “Adequate housing is a universal human right and should be at the centre of the urban policy. It is part of the right to an adequate standard of living and it means much more than having four walls and a roof.” He further stated that the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goal’s target “To ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums by 2030” are both fundamental to ensure a dignified life for millions of people worldwide.

The event also featured song and dance presentations by local school children and concluded with the handing over of prizes to school children for art and essay competitions, awards to Construction Industrial development Authority (CIDA) trainees and house ownership documents to residents.



Mr. Talpahewa delivering the UN-Habitat Executive Director’s message.