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# Hunger for alternative energy must not increase hunger for food - President at World Energy Forum

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Countries must bear in mind that in search for alternative energy sources agricultural land of today and tomorrow must not be used. We must not let the hunger of alternative energy lead to an increase in hunger for food. The use of food crops for fuel production must be avoided to prevent the spread of today's threat to food security caused by turning food crops into fuel crops. The food energy for peoples' lives should not be made the driving energy for cars, President Mahinda Rajapaksa said. "In addition to monetary assistance the transfer of technologies on sustainable energy generation to developing nations is now an imperative because a technology must move into economic viability for developing countries to embrace sustainable and clean energy", President said addressing the World Energy Forum in Dubai today.

Any policy that would not consider the imbalance in the ability of developed and developing nations to absorb new technologies is likely to be rejected by the people. Such measures might be viewed as unjust, unilateral and self-serving of an influential few. Therefore it is extremely important to balance the right of every nation to development with our shared desire to have a sustainable and Greener planet, he added. A modern economy needs to secure cheap, reliable and efficient energy resources. Today, all nations face the challenge of securing such resources. It is important to strike a balance between the ever-growing demand for energy and the need to harness energy resources in a sustainable and equitable manner. Our challenge is to maintain this balance for the benefit of future generations, President Rajapaksa said. Full text of the speech :

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and the Ruler of Dubai, His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, His Majesties, His Highnesses, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, At the outset let me convey my sincere best wishes and gratitude towards His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and the Government of the United Arab Emirates and to His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations for their timely initiative to address the issue of global energy security and sustainable development. This year, 2012 designated by the United Nations as the "International Year of Sustainable Energy for All" makes it the best time to initiate a Forum of this nature. I believe this Forum would give us the opportunity to share the experiences of other nations and draw attention to the challenges faced by my country and other developing nations on energy related issues. Your Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, The United Nations has recognized the Right to Development as a Human Right in 1986. It is our belief that development is a universal right of every country and citizen. It is most important to give form and substance to this right and to have it reflected in the lives of all our people. Today Sri Lanka is steadily moving towards economic development with remarkable progress and promise of growth after a three decade old conflict that ravaged the country. Sri Lanka's sustained high growth has placed it among middle income economies in the world. Enjoying democratic governance for many decades people of Sri Lanka expect rapid and tangible economic progress. Energy security plays a crucial role in this process. It poses difficult challenges even to governments most committed to the betterment of their people. A modern economy needs to secure cheap, reliable and efficient energy resources. Today, all nations face the challenge of securing such resources. It is important to strike a balance between the ever-growing demand for energy and the need to harness energy resources in a sustainable and equitable manner. Our challenge is to maintain this balance for the benefit of future generations. Your Highness, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, The path taken by some of the developed nations to reach their present status has not always been sustainable, environmentally friendly or even ethical. The crises such as the grave depletion of energy resources environmental damage and disparities in sharing of energy resources, were the results of these actions. The harmful path taken by these developed nations is now a major challenge to all of humanity. Today, we all carry the burden of healing our planet to ensure sustainable energy use to benefit future generations. Today, Asia is fast awakening reaching great milestones in economic growth. In the last two decades alone Asia has pulled more people out of poverty than at any other time in human history. This was done by creating favourable conditions for rapid economic growth. However, the scarcity of energy resources would obstruct this upward mobility of Asian countries. As the Global South is realizing its true potential it may be called upon to pay for the sins of others in their rush to development. However I firmly believe this is not the time for blame alone. There is a greater demand for determined and focused action. One must therefore stress the need to consider the aspirations and rights of the developing world in sharing energy resources in a just and equitable manner.

Your Highness, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, Let me briefly touch upon some of my country's experiences in the energy sector where it faces several challenges. While it is absolutely necessary to ensure a continuous supply of electricity and petroleum products, the expanding economy has to manage a strategic balance between local energy resources and imported fossil fuels. In 1995, Sri Lanka produced 95% of the grid electrical energy needs from conventional hydro-power plants. However with almost all hydro-power generating capacities utilized and energy demand greatly expanding the government is now forced to look into alternatives to fossil fuels. The share of electricity generated through conventional hydro-power has been reduced to 35%. We are proud that all Sri Lankans would shortly have access to household electricity. At present, nearly 90% of households in Sri Lanka have electricity. However the cost of generating electricity has significantly increased along with greater dependence on fossil fuels. As a country that does not produce petroleum, this is an additional burden on our economy. Almost one quarter of the value of total annual

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imports of Sri Lanka goes on crude oil and petroleum products.

Your Highness, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to state that my government has identified the necessity for energy independence. In 2007, we established the Sustainable Energy Authority, to identify and implement policies to reduce our dependency on imported fossil fuels. We have since added wind, solar and hydro power to our energy resources. Sri Lanka seeks to increase the share of renewable energy in power generation to 10% in 2015 and to 20% by the end of 2020. Conventional energy resources such as large and small scale hydro-power have enabled Sri Lanka to produce nearly half of its energy requirement through Green means. As a developing country, we are very proud of this achievement, which has increased our energy productivity and minimized waste during transmission. However, the reality is that alternatives to fossil fuels are not cheap, at least at their initial stages. Therefore, the developing countries should be encouraged to make correct choices in determining alternative energy resources most beneficial for all in the long term. Countries must bear in mind that in this search for alternative energy sources agricultural land of today and tomorrow must not be used. We must not let the hunger for alternative energy lead to an increase in hunger for food. The use of food crops for fuel production must be avoided to prevent the spread of today's threat to food security caused by turning food crops into fuel crops. The food energy for peoples' lives should not be made the driving energy for cars. In addition to monetary assistance the transfer of technologies on sustainable energy generation to developing nations is now an imperative because a technology must move into economic viability for developing countries to embrace sustainable and clean energy. Any policy that would not consider the imbalance in the ability of developed and developing nations to absorb new technologies is likely to be rejected by the people. Such measures might be viewed as unjust, unilateral and self-serving of an influential few. Therefore it is extremely important to balance the right of every nation to development with our shared desire to have a sustainable and Greener planet. Your Highness, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I take this opportunity to wish all success to the deliberations of the World Energy Forum and thank once again His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum and the Government of the United Arab Emirates for the wonderful hospitality and the leadership taken to address this important and most timely issue. May you all be blessed by the Noble Triple Gem! Thank you.