

Norway supports continued cooperation in fisheries research between NARA and IMR

Apr 20, Colombo: The National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) in Sri Lanka and the Institute of Marine Research, Norway (IMR) entered into an agreement today to continue cooperation in fisheries research in Sri Lankan waters.

Today's signature event is a symbol of the successful cooperation between NARA and IMR since 2017. The two institutions will engage in research on fish stocks in the waters of Sri Lanka, with the aim of improved and sustainable management of marine resources in the country.

Norway's financial assistance enabled an ecosystem survey in the coastal waters of Sri Lanka by the Norwegian Research Vessel Dr. Fridtjof Nansen in Sri Lanka in 2018. After the successful completion of the first phase of the project, the Norwegian Embassy was pleased to approve the second phase of the project for development of fisheries management tools at a cost of close to NOK 8.75mn (approx. 1 Million USD), which will be operational until 2022.

Speaking at the event, the Norwegian Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Trine Jøranli Eskedal, underscored that Norway is "committed to bilateral cooperation on oceans and to helping Sri Lanka put in place data-based management systems for ocean resources, which will enable Sri Lanka to better monitor its fish stocks." She added that the Norwegian fisheries cooperation with Sri Lanka, which dates back to the 1970s, includes fisheries management, research and education, and private sector development. From 2013 to 2020, NOK 20.3 mill. (approx. 2.4 mill. USD) have been disbursed to the fisheries sector.

Ambassador Eskedal also highlighted the importance of sharing these research findings with other Sri Lankan stakeholders, both in the public and private sector, to make informed decisions related to oceans and fisheries and to bringing in new and advanced technology to Sri Lanka's fisheries sector. She also reiterated the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) – to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources, and the importance of the fisheries sector to advance more sustainable economic growth in Sri Lanka.

Speaking at the event, the Chairman of NARA, Prof. Navaratnarajah underscored the importance of this cooperation: "The technical assistance from IMR scientists provides immense support to develop the capacity of Sri Lankan scientists, while enabling the collection of proper marine data in a scientific manner." He also added that Norway's support to the fisheries sector in the past was remarkable, and that NARA, with the guidance of the Ministry of Fisheries of Sri Lanka and its sister organizations, hopes to continue the bilateral relationships while strengthening the technical cooperation with IMR in the future.

Speaking at the event, State Minister Kanchana Wijesekara mentioned that the government's strategy for enhancing the marine fisheries sector in Sri Lanka aims at developing and managing the sector in a successful way using scientific evidence and modern technology. "To obtain science-based recommendations for managing the fisheries, capacity building of Sri Lankan scientists is essential," the State Minister underscored.

Speaking at the event, the Minister of Fisheries, Douglas Devananda, mentioned that the government of Sri Lanka is looking for renewed opportunities to strengthen the fisheries sector. "Research projects of this nature are an opportunity for our Sri Lankan fishermen and for the

sector as a whole. Sri Lanka and Norway have a longstanding bilateral relationship within the fisheries sector and wish to ensure the livelihoods of fishermen and the local economy,” he stressed. The Minister added that Sri Lanka is an island nation blessed with abundant marine resources. It is the government’s mandate to sustain such resources, while bringing in research-based advanced technology to boost the sector. The Minister also thanked the Government of Norway for its continued support during these unprecedented times.

Minister Douglas Devananda, Ministry of Fisheries, Kanchana Wijesekara, State Minister of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fish & Prawn Farming, Fishery Harbor Development, Multiday Fishing Activities and Fish Exports, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Norway Godfrey Cooray, Indu Ratnayake, Secretary of the Ministry of Fisheries, Jayantha Chandrasoma, Secretary to the State Ministry of Ornamental Fish, Prof. Navaratnarajah, Chairman NARA, and representatives of NARA, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries and a number of other government officials were present at the event.