

## INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2023

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023, under the theme “Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for all” at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute. The event was graced by the distinguished presence of the Chief Guest, Former Chairperson of the HRCSL (2003-2006) Dr Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Chairman of the HRCSL, Justice Dehideniya, the Members of the Commission and the Secretary of the HRCSL.

Dr Radhika Coomaraswamy delivering the key note speech presented a brief history attached to the adoption of the UDHR and highlighted the significant foundation it set forth for the formation of the international human rights framework. Making reference to the current criticisms levelled against international law, in the backdrop of the ongoing human rights catastrophes around the world, she emphasised that the need of the hour is not to criticise but to strengthen and find solutions to such catastrophes, through international human rights law.

The event also marked the launch of the Commission’s ‘*Draft General Guidelines and Recommendations on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders*’, ‘*Draft General Guidelines and Recommendations to the Sri Lanka Police and other relevant Authorities on Prevention of Custodial and Encounter Deaths*’ and ‘*The Interim Report of the Fact Finding Mission on Right to Health and Liberty of Patients at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIIMH)*’, over presentations by three commissioners; Dr Gehan Gunatilleke, Mr Nimal Punchihewa and Prof Farzana Haniffa respectively. Consequently, Prof. Thaiyamuththu Thanaraja presented the draft guidelines and the interim report to the distinguished invitees.

The event concluded by calling upon all stakeholders present at the occasion, to submit to the Commission, their feedback on the documents that were launched, at their earliest. The stakeholders present at the occasion included, representatives from the State, Law Enforcement Authorities, Diplomatic Missions, Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Human Rights Defenders and academics.



Chairman, Justice L T B Dehideniya delivering the welcome address



Chief Guest, Dr Radhika Coomaraswamy



Commissioner Prof. Thanaraja presenting the guidelines and report



Stakeholders participating at the occasion