



## **SRI LANKA'S CANDIDATURE TO THE UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD 2015-2019.**



**Hon. Akila Viraj  
Kariyawasam  
Minister of Education  
Democratic Socialist Republic  
of Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka being one of the earliest members of UNESCO (since 1949) has been an active partner in most of the UNESCO led initiatives.

Presently, Sri Lanka is a State Party to many Agreements and Conventions of UNESCO.

In addition, Sri Lanka is a member of the International Coordinating Council of the programme on Man and the Biosphere. Furthermore, Sri Lanka held the Chair of the Asia Pacific Group of UNESCO in 2003.

Recent initiatives by Sri Lanka at UNESCO include the resolution adopted by the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference to establish the South Asian Centre for Teacher Development in Meepe, Sri Lanka and the resolution to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of late Prof. Ediriweera Sarachchandra adopted by the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference. A special ceremony was held at the UNESCO Head Quarters in celebration of this Birth Anniversary accompanied by a cultural show and an Exhibition to honour the late scholar. The Agreement between the UNESCO and the government of Sri Lanka to establish the South Asian Centre for Teacher Development was signed concurrently to this event.

Since joining the UNESCO membership in 1949, Sri Lanka has served on the Executive Board only on five occasions.

Being committed to the UNESCO ideal of building peace in the minds, Sri Lanka has the honor to submit the candidature of Hon. Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, Minister of Education, Sri Lanka, for election to the UNESCO Executive Board, during the 39<sup>th</sup> General Conference in October 2015.

In this regard, the Government of Sri Lanka kindly requests, the UNESCO Member States to extend their valuable support for the candidature of Sri Lanka to the Executive Board of UNESCO.

## Curriculum Vitae

Akila Viraj Kariyawasam  
Minister of Education

Date of Birth : 23rd May 1973  
Marital Status : Married

## Education Qualification

1999 : BA degree in Economics, Political  
Science & International Affairs  
University of Colombo

2012 : LLB, Open University of Sri Lanka.

## Professional Qualifications

: Attorney - at -Law.

## Professional Experience

: Adviser - Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation.  
: Director "Tharuna Aruna" – Ministry of Finance.

## Political Carrier

1995 : Chairman – National Youth Front Kuliypitiya  
Electorate (United National Party).

1996 : Chairman – National Youth Front Kurunegala District.

1999 : General Secretary – National Youth Front (United National  
Party) all island.

2003 : United National Party Organizer – Panduwasnuwara  
Electorate.

2005 : United National Party Organizer – Kuliypitiya  
Electorate.

2004 – to date : Elected as a Member of Parliament from Kurunegala  
District representing United National Party and Party  
Leader of Kurunegala District

## **Ministerial Portfolios held**

2015 to date : Minister of Education.

## **Other Portfolios held**

2015 to date : Chairman of the Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO.

## **Honorable Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, Minister of Education**

### **Academic Pursuits;**

Born in 1973 in Kuliyaipitiya, Sri Lanka, Mr. Akila Viraj Kariyawasam had his schooling at Kuliyaipitiya Central College. In his family of 6 members, 5 are graduates. Three of them are lawyers. One is a doctor of law in Australia's Griffith University. It was in keeping with this academic tradition in the family that Akila - who studied at Kuliyaipitiya Central College – was selected to enter the University of Colombo. He obtained a degree in economics, political science and international affairs as well as a degree in law.

### **Political Achievements;**

Akila entered politics while he was studying for his A/L exams at Kuliyaipitiya Central College. Hailing from a family that had traditionally supported the UNP, he chose this party to engage in politics. This was during the time that the present UNP Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe changed the name of the UNP Youth Front into the National Youth Front and went from village to village appointing officials to it. Akila was elected the Chairman of the National Youth Front in Kuliyaipitiya by a large majority. His election as Chairman of the Kurunegala District in 1995, and as a Member of the Working Committee of the National Youth Front was by a majority of over 90% of votes cast by the Executive Council of the Kurunegala District. Later, he became Deputy Chairman and General Secretary of the National Youth Front obtaining the votes of the Executive Members of the Front. His first political battle was as a university student organizing a mass protest campaign throughout the country in 1999 against attempts by the government to reform the education system. During these protests, he was arrested by the police and jailed, and while in prison he earned a reputation as a political fighter. He contested the general election in 2004 and was elected to Parliament with 83114 preferential votes, coming in third place in the candidates list for Kurunegala. Thereafter, the party assigned him the subject of Education and Higher Education and he is performing his duties on this subject in and outside Parliament in a vibrant manner. In 2007 he was appointed as Chairman of the National Youth Front. To bring in a U.N.P government he is doing a great service to the party and he is currently engaged in carrying out his task in a wide political sphere.

## **Course of Action for Better Education System**

As the Minister of Education with a vision for overall human resource development, Hon. Kariyawasam has following plans to improve the system;

- Devising a new educational system to succeed in the changing world
- Drafting the national policy on education
- Devising an educational system in accordance with the job market
- Removing political interference from the educational system
- Improve the quality of teachers for better quality education
- Making Sri Lanka the country with the best educational system in the world
- Establishing enterprises that provide our youth with the opportunity to offer technology services and thereby catalyze a revolutionary change in the local job market.
- Launching educational courses targeting foreign employment opportunities.

### **Parliamentary Committees involved;**

- Consultative Committee on Youth Affairs and Skills Development
- Committee on Public Accounts
- Consultative Committee on Economic Development
- Consultative Committee on Education
- Consultative Committee on Plantation Industries
- Consultative Committee on Finance & Planning
- Consultative Committee on Livestock and Rural Community Development
- Consultative Committee on Higher Education
- Select Committee of Parliament on Traffic Accidents
- Consultative Committee on Coconut Development and Janatha Estate Development
- Consultative Committee on Civil Aviation
- Consultative Committee on Education Services
- Select Committee of Parliament to discuss the Heads of Expenditure of Ministries selected from the Budget Estimates of 2015

## **Sri Lanka Vision and For UNESCO**

Sri Lanka Through its nominee, Hon Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, in the Executive Board, pledges to;

- Uphold UNESCO's constitutional mandate to build peace, the eradication of poverty, continue sustainable development and intercultural dialogue, through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.
- Promote quality education for all through teacher development and introduction of necessary reforms.
- Promote peace and social cohesion through education for peace and sustainable development, cultural exchange programmes and cultural festivals.
- Promote UNESCO efforts at interfaith and intercultural dialogue for international understanding
- Work towards making the quality and relevance of UNESCO's fields of competence felt at the national levels.
- Promote and strengthen a decentralized UNESCO including the strengthening of the UNESCO's unique concept of National Commissions
- Strengthen UNESCO's position as a standard setter and in providing evidence based policy research to member states.
- Promote youth involvement in UNESCO activities and Education Service Delivery.
- Improve cooperation in research, development and sharing of best practices among member states.
- Strengthen inter-sectoral approaches, both at UNESCO and in the member states, in the implementation of programmes related to UNESCO's field of competence.
- Encourage continued reforms within UNESCO, to best serve the interests of the member states.
- Strengthen regional cooperation in Education and UNESCO activities.
- Above all, through UNESCO, promote the respect for human dignity and right and respect for the environment, the cornerstones for achieving peace and sustainable development.