



Institute of National Security Studies  
Closed Door Round Table Discussion on  
**“Marine Environment Protection in Sri Lanka: A Lesson Learnt from Recent  
Maritime Accidents”**

**Post-Event Press Release**

Institute of National Security Studies (INSS), the premier think tank on national security established under the Ministry of Defence organized a Close Door Round Table Discussion on “Marine Environment Protection in Sri Lanka: A Lesson Learnt from Recent Maritime Accidents” on Wednesday, the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2023, from 1400hrs to 1600hrs (IST) via Zoom. The four esteemed Guest Speakers for the event were, Mrs. Dharshani Lahandapura, the Chairperson of the Marine Environment Protection Authority, Prof. Prasanthi Gunawardene, Department of Forestry and Environmental Science, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Dr. Dan Malika Gunesekara, Attorney-at-Law and Captain (G) Lasantha Vithanage, the Commanding Officer of SLCGS Suraksha, Sri Lanka Coast Guard. The moderator for this informative and timely session was Rear Admiral Dimuthu Gunawardena RWP\*\*, RSP, VSV, USP, nswc, psc, hdmc, Acting Director General and Director (Communications and Publications), of the Institute of National Security Studies. The audience comprised of ministry officials, academics, researchers, policymakers, representatives from Sri Lanka Armed Forces, Sri Lanka Police, Sri Lanka Coast Guard and Civil Security Department.

Subsequent to the introduction given by the moderator, the first speaker Mrs. Dharshani Lahandapura commenced her presentation by giving a brief introduction of the Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) and its role and functions in protecting marine environment in Sri Lanka. In addition, she also discussed the implementation of National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCOP) in Sri Lanka and the application of Marine Pollution prevention Act. Finally she elaborated how MEPA responded to recent ship-based accidents such as MV MT New Diamond and MV X-Press Pearl. In supporting the points highlighted by Mrs. Dharshani Lahandapura, the second speaker, Prof. Prashanthi Gunawardene delivered her presentation focused on the economic valuation of maritime accidents, along with the statistical assessments of recent marine environmental damages and estimated compensations for the same. Finally, she highlighted the complexities in applying marine environmental valuation and the elements impact on maritime security. Moving on with the third speaker, Dr. Dan Malika Gunesekara presented applicability of law aftermath a maritime accident. During his presentation he discussed threats posed by ship wreck and the legal status of ship wrecks in Merchant Shipping Act No.52 of 1971. Furthermore, he highlighted gaps in application of international laws into the prevailing local laws. The forth speaker, Captain (G) Lasantha Vithanage brought out a clear insight on the topic of the Marine Emergency Response and Role of Sri Lanka Coast Guard. During his discussion he highlighted on major marine emergencies, the duties and responsibilities of Coast Guard when activated NOSCOP and maritime casualty management. At the end, he discussed the Sri Lanka Coast Guard capabilities and the equipment available for maritime disaster response.

Following up, several timely related questions under the discussed topic of concern were posed by the audience in the Q and A segment, where each speaker was directed with a question as per their topic of discussion. The speakers responded constructively along with adequate facts as well as realistic concerns of the current context. Finally, Ms. Methma Ranaweera, Research Intern of the Institute of National Security Studies, delivered the Vote of thanks, marking the end of yet another insightful and engaging Closed Door Round Table Discussion conducted under a timely theme of debate.