



## FICAC South Asia Regional Conference 2026

Colombo, Sri Lanka | 1–4 February 2026

The FICAC South Asia Regional Conference convened in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 1 to 4 February 2026, bringing together distinguished members of the global diplomatic and consular community for four days of high-level dialogue, institutional reflection, economic visioning, and intercultural engagement.

Organized by the Association of Consuls in Sri Lanka in partnership with the International Federation of Consular Corps and Associations (FICAC) and hosted at the Cinnamon Life — City of Dreams, Colombo, the event served as a strategic platform for strengthening cooperation across South Asia and beyond, underscoring the enduring relevance of consular diplomacy in an era of interconnected global challenges.

The Conference united honorary consuls, senior government officials, diplomatic representatives, institutional partners, and invited experts, reaffirming FICAC's mission to serve as a bridge between nations, cultures, and economies through the unique role of the consular institution.



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## Cultural Welcome and Informal Diplomacy

The Conference commenced on **1 February 2026** with the opening of the registration desk and an initial networking session, providing delegates with the opportunity to engage in informal exchanges in an atmosphere of cordiality and mutual respect.

In the evening, foreign delegates were honoured to witness the **Navam Perahera** at Gangaramaya Temple — Sri Lanka's most vibrant cultural procession — featuring elaborately adorned elephants, traditional dancers, drummers, monks, and ritual performances. This spectacular pageant offered participants a profound immersion into the island's spiritual heritage and centuries-old traditions.

The day concluded with a traditional Sri Lankan dinner at **Nuga Gama**, Cinnamon Grand Colombo, where delegates experienced authentic local cuisine and cultural performance arts in a setting inspired by a rural village, reinforcing the role of culture as a cornerstone of diplomatic understanding.

## Official Opening and High-Level Addresses

The official proceedings began on **2 February 2026**, marked by ceremonial protocol including the National Anthem of Sri Lanka and a traditional Oil Lamp Lighting Ceremony.

The Conference was honoured by the presence of **Hon. Dr. Vijitha Herath**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment & Tourism of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, who delivered a keynote address emphasising the vital role of consular cooperation in addressing contemporary global challenges.

The Chief Guest, **Hon. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya**,



Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, reaffirmed the Government's commitment to inclusive development, sustainable reform, and the shared responsibilities of the international community, underscoring that global cooperation is indispensable for addressing economic, social, and environmental imperatives in the twenty-first century.



Opening remarks were also delivered by **Hon. Mahen Kariyawasan**, President of the Association of Consuls in Sri Lanka, and **Hon. Nikolaos K. Margaropoulos**, President of F.I.C.A.C., who underscored the strategic importance of the Conference as a venue for dialogue, capacity-building, and partnership across diplomatic and commercial spheres.



### Strategic Dialogues, Institutional Presentations and Partnerships

The Conference programme featured a comprehensive agenda of institutional and thematic sessions, including FICAC presentations on the Executive Diploma in Consular Practice and Diplomacy—demonstrating the Federation’s commitment to professionalizing consular roles and enhancing diplomatic capacities across member associations—as well as expert presentations on emerging global issues, consular responsibilities in a rapidly changing world, and the evolving intersections of diplomatic practice, economic engagement, and technological innovation.

A key moment of the day was the presentation by **VFS Global**, Principal Sponsor of the Conference, illustrating how trusted technology solutions — including digital platforms and generative artificial intelligence — are expanding the effectiveness and reach of consular and visa operations, thereby supporting governments and diplomatic missions worldwide.

### Green Diplomacy and Sustainability

Another central pillar of the Conference was the **2nd Green Diplomacy Forum**, moderated by **Hon. Gönül Oray Eken**, Honorary Consul of Saint



Kitts & Nevis in Turkey, together with **Hon. Dr. Aykut Eken**, F.I.C.A.C. President Emeritus and Honorary Consul General of Saint Kitts & Nevis in Belgium and of Jamaica in Turkey, whose longstanding joint engagement in environmental diplomacy and institutional cooperation continues to inspire

the Federation’s strategic initiatives. Esteemed





speakers explored climate diplomacy, sustainable trade, and the strategic role of consular and civic actors in navigating global polycrises, reaffirming F.I.C.A.C.'s leadership in promoting environmentally responsible diplomacy and translating global commitments into local and regional action.

## Economic Vision and Consular Training

On **3 February**, prominent Sri Lankan policymakers and economic leaders delivered high-level presentations on national economic outlook, foreign investment opportunities, tourism strategy, and export development, positioning Sri Lanka as a dynamic gateway to South Asia's growing markets.

In parallel, the **FICAC Training Program**, moderated by **Hon. Asif Chowdhury**, Vice-President of F.I.C.A.C., offered a comprehensive framework focused on consular mission, ethical responsibilities, cultural diplomacy, and economic engagement, delivered by Board Members representing the Federation's global diversity.

## Symbolic Civic Engagement

That same afternoon, FICAC directors and delegates, led by the President of the Federation, participated in a **Tree-Planting Ceremony** at Viharamahadevi Park together with **Dr. Vraie Cally Balthazaar, Mayor of Colombo**. This civic and environmental gesture underscored the shared commitment of local authorities and the international consular community to sustainability, green diplomacy, and community engagement at both local and global levels.



The **Conference's ceremonial moments**, including Welcome Cocktails, a state dinner hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a Black-Tie Farewell Gala hosted by the Association of Consuls in Sri Lanka, further reinforced the bonds of friendship, mutual respect, and diplomatic fraternity.



## **National Significance and Conclusion**

The Conference concluded on 4 February 2026 with participation in Sri Lanka's 78th National Independence Day Celebrations at Independence Square, a poignant expression of national pride and an affirmation of the enduring partnership between the host Republic and the international diplomatic and consular community.

**President Anura Kumara Dissanayake** marked the occasion with an address focused on the theme of *“Rebuilding Sri Lanka”*, highlighting the nation’s progress and resilience. He emphasized the importance of inclusive economic growth, national unity, and social cohesion, outlining key priorities including the modernization of education, the strengthening of public services, and sustainable development. The President further underlined the need to overcome divisions such as racism and extremism, reaffirming Sri Lanka’s commitment to strong international cooperation as a cornerstone of its future.

The FICAC South Asia Regional Conference in Colombo stood as a testament to the Federation's global stature and its unwavering dedication to diplomacy, education, sustainability, and intercultural dialogue. It reaffirmed the vital role of honorary consuls as trusted actors in advancing cooperation, prosperity, and peace among nations.

## The Presidential Report: Strategic Vision and Outcomes



## At the heart of the South Asia Regional

Conference lay a forward-looking Presidential Report by **Hon. Nikolaos K. Margaropoulos**, President of FICAC, and Honorary Consul of the Philippines in Thessaloniki, which articulated a comprehensive vision for the Federation's future direction:



## **Global Engagement and Regional Empowerment:**

The Conference reaffirmed FICAC's strategic objective to strengthen consular influence not only in traditional areas of citizen protection and assistance but increasingly in economic diplomacy, trade facilitation, sustainable development, and climate action.

## **Capacity Building and Professional Development:**

Successful deployment of the **Executive Diploma in Consular Practice and Diplomacy** signifies the Federation's ongoing commitment to institutional excellence and educational enrichment, positioning honorary consuls as highly skilled practitioners in international affairs.

## **Partnership and Innovation:**

Partnerships with private sector leaders in technology and governance reflect a deliberate emphasis on innovation and modernization of consular functions, while fostering public-private collaboration that advances both diplomatic and economic interests.

## **Sustainability and Shared Responsibility:**

FICAC's leadership in forums such as the Green Diplomacy Forum underscores its resolve to champion global sustainability initiatives, recognizing that environmental stability and resilient communities are fundamental pillars of secure and prosperous societies.

Collectively, these strategic pillars chart a course for FICAC that is at once global in reach and deeply rooted in regional engagement — uniting diverse constituencies in a shared pursuit of cooperation, peace, and mutual prosperity.



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