

Awareness Programme for Journalists on Sri Lanka's Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing National Risk Assessment 2021/2022 and Mutual Evaluation – March 2025

held on 3rd October 2023 at Centre for Banking Studies, Rajagiriya

Aimed at ensuring awareness on recently released National Risk Assessment (NRA) on money laundering and terrorist financing (ML/TF) and enhanced preparedness in view of Sri Lanka's upcoming Mutual Evaluation by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) conducted a full day in-person awareness programme for journalists on "Sri Lanka's Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing National Risk Assessment 2021/2022 and Mutual Evaluation March 2025" on October 3, 2023, from 9.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. at Centre for Banking Studies, Rajagiriya. The workshop saw the active participation of 35 representatives from print and electronic media institutions.

The programme featured a number of presentations and discussions which focused on promoting awareness on most significant threats related to ML/TF as highlighted in NRA, Anti Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) mutual evaluation process and country's obligations to implement a robust AML/CFT system. Key topics discussed included mutual evaluation of Sri Lanka in 2025 and the international requirements by Dr. Subhani Keerthiratne - Additional Director of FIU, ML/TF national risk assessment 2021/2022 by Dr. Ayesh Ariyasinghe - Additional Director of FIU, mutual evaluation process by Mrs. Theja Pathberiya - Deputy Director of FIU and financial scams by Mr. Dilan Siriwardana - Senior Assistant Director of FIU.

While discoursing upcoming mutual evaluation and adverse impact of non-compliance, Dr. Subhani Keerthiratne elucidated the importance of enhancing cooperation of journalists to promote awareness among authorities and public on their obligations and necessary reforms to enhance compliance and effectiveness of Sri Lanka's AML/CFT regime which call out concerted efforts of all stakeholders for effective implementation of priority actions.

Dr. Ayesh Ariyasinghe presented Sri Lanka's ML/TF national risk assessment highlighting the most significant ML/TF threats, vulnerabilities and risks faced by the country. He disseminated extensive information on recently completed ML/TF NRA as NRA is a critical tool in

identifying specific risks associated with ML and TF within the country. He highlighted drug trafficking, bribery and corruption, customs related offences including trade-based proceeds as the most prevalent predicate offences and money laundering threat of country which was rated as medium high. Moreover, Dr. Ariyasinghe discussed the strategic deficiencies in Sri Lanka's AML/CFT regime, objectives of national AML/CFT policy and institutional action plans to fulfill the objectives and obligations set forth.

Mrs. Theja Pathberiya, spoke about the FATF recommendations, mutual evaluation process with key priorities for consideration and integral role of the journalists in promoting dialogue on AML/CFT concerns. The programme also reflected the trends of financial scams presented by Mr. Dilan Siriwardana. He discussed the trends and types of scams, techniques used by scammers, what precautions individuals should take to avoid falling prey to scams and legal and institutional actions against scammers.

Enoka Mohotty, Director of FIU highlighted that this form of workshops aims to facilitate interaction between journalists and FIU, enhancing their understanding of regulatory requirements, different challenges, and shared aspirations to foster cooperation of stakeholders in implementing sound measures and ensuring constant efforts to tackle threats to the integrity of the Sri Lanka's financial system. Further, this awareness programme was expected to enable deeper understanding within the journalists about the country's ML/TF risks and AML/CFT obligations, in order to enhance transparency, accountability and responsible journalism as journalists will be effectively promoting the dialogue and understanding within the country.