



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A New Era of Partnership (2025/2026)



Dear Valued Members,

I am honored to address you once again following our 26th Annual General Meeting held last September. Our council remains a cornerstone among the Business Councils of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, dedicated to fostering the historic commercial and socio-cultural ties between Sri Lanka and Italy.

This past year has been a testament to our resilience. Despite global economic shifts, and some drastic action in the geopolitical sphere, bilateral trade remains a vital pillar of our economy. Italy continues to be a top-tier export destination for Sri Lankan apparel, rubber, and food products. We have seen a steady return to growth in Euro terms, and the balance of trade remains firmly in Sri Lanka's favor.

Reflecting on 2025: A Year of Engagement

Our council's activities in 2025 were geared towards deep industrial and cultural connections:

Tourism Revitalization: In collaboration with the Italian Embassy, we hosted the high-profile workshop "Winning & Retaining Italian Tourists". This session addressed the "wish list" of luxury Italian travelers—personalized itineraries and high-quality service—essential for Sri Lanka to remain competitive.

Diplomatic Momentum: The inaugural Political Consultations held in September 2025 between our two nations identified key avenues for institutional cooperation in workforce mobility, renewable energy, and digital transformation.



Cultural Excellence: We celebrated the 10th Week of Italian Cuisine in November 2025 with an exclusive seven-course dining experience at the Amari Colombo, emphasizing our belief that cultural understanding is the bedrock of successful business.

Looking Forward: Priorities for 2026

Our seminar in April on Navigating Geopolitical Tensions with a stellar panel was a tremendous success, so much so that many others organized similar seminars addressing both general and specialised perspectives.

As the Sri Lankan economy is projected to grow by 4.6% in 2025 and stabilize further in 2026, our council will prioritize:

Digital Transformation Aligning with the national focus on a digital economy, we will provide members with more digital networking tools to bridge the gap with Italian partners.

Sustainability & Agri-Food Leveraging Italian expertise in technology transfer to enhance our agri-food value chains and climate-resilient energy projects.

Investment Advocacy We will continue to support Italian investors—and advocate for the early conclusion of bilateral instruments that simplify migration and mobility for our professionals.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to our Patron, H.E. Damiano Francovich, for his unwavering support extended to the SLIBC. & also like to thank Dr. Alberto Arcidiacono Deputy head of mission for insightful information of the Italian trade relations

To our members: your innovation and dedication are what drive this partnership forward.

Together, let us make 2026 a year of recovered and renewed stability, as well as expanded horizons.

DAMINDA MULGAMA

President

Sri Lanka Italy Business Council president@srilankaitaly.com



HON PATRON'S MESSAGE

Caro Amici,

I am really glad that the Sri Lanka – Italy Business Council is releasing the second edition of “Ciao” newsletter. This publication is a valuable bridge between our two countries, fostering stronger partnerships and new opportunities for collaboration across trade and investments.

By highlighting the initiatives carried out during 2025, the newsletter plays an important role in bringing the members of the SLIBC closer together, while encouraging other Sri Lankan business entities having ties with Italy to come nearer.

This second edition confirms the vision, professionalism and dedication of SLIBC President and board. It reflects also the hope for a stronger interest in Italy among Sri Lankan businesses and the potential for expanding cooperation in key sectors.

I am confident that this initiative will continue to grow in impact and relevance, further strengthening the bonds between our countries.

Damiano Francovich
Ambassador
Ambassador of Italy to Sri Lanka and the Maldives
Embassy of Italy (Colombo)





26TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025



Seated (left to right)

Mr. Janaka Gunasekera *Imm. Past President*, Mrs. Dushy Jayaweera *Vice President*; H.E. Damiano Francovich *Patron*, Mr. Daminda Mulgama *President*, Mr. Alberto Arcidiacono *Deputy Head of Mission*; Ms. Gloria Hewapatha *Secretariat*. Mr. Sanjeeva Rajapakse, Mr. Felix A. Fernando; Mr. Ranjit Jayewardene *Honorary member*; Ms. Anika Williamson.

Around 75 members and their guests attended the 26th Annual General Meeting, at the new Emerald Ballroom, Sheraton Hotel, Colombo 03.

It was an evening of fellowship, networking, and great camaraderie. Mr. Felix A. Fernando, of Omega Line, a committee member representing the largest Italian investor in Sri Lanka, delivered a most thought provoking and insightful keynote address.



H.E. Damiano Francovich, Ambassador of Italy, Patron of the Council and Deputy Head of Mission Mr. Alberto Arcidiacono, graced the occasion.



CENA alla ROMANA



To commemorate the 10th Italian Cuisine Week
X° Settimana della Cucina Italiana nel Mondo

A Celebration of Health, Culture, and Innovation

[SEVEN COURSE ROMAN DINNER](#)
[PAIRED WITH FINE ITALIAN WINES](#)

Date - Friday, 28 November 2025

Cena alla Romana, in commemoration of the 10th Week of Italian Cuisine in the World, was held at the Executive



Lounge of the Amari Colombo, **Chef Michele Bravo**, with Executive Chef Sampath Mahawattage, and Manager Ashwika Gajendra assisted to deliver a seven course Roman menu, with Wine Pairing introduced by sommelier Nishada Periyapperuma from IDL.

President Daminda Mulgama and Event Chair Rajeev Aloysius, joined several members and their VIP guests for the evening, which was very well received. The event was the third in the series, following Cena Veneziana in 2023 (#Veneto) and Cena Apulia (#Puglia) in 2024.





Members Day

A member's evening was held by the Sri Lanka Italy Business Council at The Long Room, Galle Face Hotel, Colombo, on 15th July. 37 members and their guests attended the event, which was graced by H.E. Damiano Francovich, Ambassador of the Embassy of Italy, and Mr. Alberto Arcidiacono, Deputy Head of Mission.

The members were given an opportunity to interact with the Embassy officials, and with each other. A private High Tea had been arranged for the occasion, with generous spread of generous spread of favourites typical of the formerly British, now Sri Lankan tradition in the atmospheric colonial surroundings.



- **Date:** Tuesday, 15 July 2025
- **Time:** 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM
- **Venue:** The Long Room, Mezzanine Level, Galle Face Hotel, Colombo
- **Guests of Honour:** H.E. Damiano Francovich
Ambassador of Italy (Patron of the Council)
Mr. Alberto Arcidiacono Deputy Head of Mission





Winning and Retaining Italian Tourists



Date Wednesday, 02 April 2025

Platinum Sponsor and Official Venue

Partner Cinnamon Life City of Dreams, Colombo

Event on the 8th Floor, Dinner on the 9th Floor at Quizine Restaurant

Time: Registration 5:30pm onwards.
Event begins at 6.00pm sharp.

Our Panel

Dr. Alberto Arcidiacono, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Italy in Sri Lanka *Keynote*

Mr. Hashan Cooray, Director - Marketing and Development, Jetwing Hotels *Moderator*

Mr. Buddhika Hewawasam, Chairman SLTDA and SLTPB, Country Representative IATA

Mr. Nalin Jayasundera, Managing Director, Aitken Spence Travels, President SLAITO

Mr. Miguel Cunat, Founder - the Pekoe Trail Organization





TRADE FAIRS IN ITALY

The Italian trade fair system, which holds national and international events devoted to subjects ranging from gold to engines, from travel to electronics, and from design to food, has always been one of the greatest allies of the **Made in Italy** tagline and concept. Production generates a domestic impact of some 22.5 billion euros every year, including services, transport, hospitality, and wages, equal to 0.7% of GDP. The trade fair industry is a multiplier not just of business, but also of high-spending business tourism, specialist services and jobs accounting for 203,000 workers, taking both indirect impact and allied industries into consideration. AEFI, which represents almost 75% of sectoral turnover, has 48 members, with 42 districts in which over 1,000 events a year range over a total 4.2 million square metres of exhibition area, and 8 organisers. It represents 200,000 businesses and 20.000.000 professionals from all over the world.

Discover the dynamic and frequently updated monthly listing of the Italian trade fair that is relevant to your business at

<https://www.aefi.it/en/calendario/>





Geopolitical Tensions and its impact on Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka-Italy Business Council presented a well-attended seminar on Geopolitical Tensions and its impact on Sri Lanka's economic recovery. Industry leaders emphasized that while immediate export volumes remain stable, the nation faces significant risks in tourism and logistics due to an increasingly unstable global order.

Strategic Economic Shift

- **From Rules to Power:** Italian Ambassador Damiano Francovich noted a global shift toward "power-based" dynamics, leading to higher energy and defense spending.
- **Market Integration:** He urged Sri Lanka to move away from a closed economic model and reduce trade barriers (tariffs and regulatory inefficiencies) to attract foreign investment.
- **Alliances:** The consensus was that smaller nations must deepen regional integration and diversify partnerships to avoid being marginalized in the global arena.

Sector-Specific Impacts

Sector	Key Challenges	Current Outlook
Tourism	17.4% decline in March; loss of \$65M in revenue; one-third of airline connectivity disrupted.	Entering "low season" cushions the blow; potential for a "super summer" if connectivity (Middle Eastern flights) restores.
Exports	Rising energy/freight costs (up 40%); increased cost for petroleum-based raw materials; buyers asking for longer credit.	Numbers are currently in line with forecasts, but experts warn of "serious" consequences if the crisis extends past June.
Shipping	35% of global routes affected; doubling of insurance/freight costs; congestion in the Port of Colombo.	Strategic importance of Sri Lanka's location is highlighted, potentially attracting long-term maritime investment.

Key Vulnerabilities & Recommendations

- **The "June Deadline":** If current tensions persist beyond the second quarter, experts warn of a possible global recession and a massive GDP drop in the Middle East, which would severely hit Sri Lankan remittances and trade.
- **Operational Control:** Exporters are advised to focus on internal efficiencies and cost control to mitigate external shocks they cannot influence.



- **Tactical Tourism:** Industry leaders called for a coherent global campaign and suggested focusing heavily on Indian and Chinese aviation markets to offset European declines.
- **Maritime Caution:** While the strategic value of Sri Lanka's shipping routes is high, experts warned against "on-paper" solutions like quickly turning Mattala Airport into a hub without addressing structural constraints.

"If you are not at the table, you are on the menu list."

— Ambassador Damiano Francovich, quoting Mark Carney





WHO WE ARE

Inaugurated under the aegis of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce on 9 October 1998, the main objective of the Sri Lanka - Italy Business Council is to promote investment, trade and joint ventures between Sri Lanka and Italy. The Council celebrated 25 years since its founding this year.

The groundwork for the formation of the Council commenced after a proposal was made in 1997 to the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, by the then-Ambassador of Italy to Sri Lanka, H.E. Maurizio Teucci. Since its inception, the Council has endeavored to support its membership which has grown to include companies involved in diverse sectors of trade and services as well as NGO's. The Executive Committee is represented by members of these sectors. Meetings are attended also by representatives from the Embassy of Italy in Colombo, the Delegation of the European Commission, the Export Development Board and the Department of Commerce, as invited observers when required. The Council maintains close ties with the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Rome.

The Sri Lanka - Italy Business Council continues to collaborate with the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce in achieving the objective of strengthening bilateral ties and promoting investment and joint venture partnerships.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ To promote trade and tourism and services between Sri Lanka and Italy and in particular to promote exports from Sri Lanka to Italy.
- ✓ To encourage the establishment of joint ventures in Sri Lanka between Italy and Sri Lankan investors.
- ✓ To exchange information on trade and investment with the appropriate bodies in Italy
- ✓ To conduct joint meetings with Italian business organizations in Sri Lanka and in Italy.
- ✓ To serve as a recognised representative of business sector interests in Sri Lanka, in matters concerning business relationships with Italy.
- ✓ To co-operate with the Government of Sri Lanka in the pursuit of the above objectives.
- ✓ To undertake all matters that are incidental or conducive to attaining the above objectives.

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