UN DESA/DSGD empower women entrepreneurs to enhance local MSME growth

United Nations Interregional Advisor for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Saras Jagwanth visited Sri Lanka recently to consult and learn from the Sri Lankan Government Ministries about how they could support efforts to enhance MSME growth in Sri Lanka.

DESA/DSGS provides substantive support and capacity building for the sustainable development goals (SDGS) and their related thematic issues.

Jagwanth, who is based in New York, is the project manager of a team on the role of small, medium and micro enterprises in achieving the SDGS. The project will run through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Subfund of the UN Peace
and Development Fund, of which the People’s Republic of China is a major contributor.

The project aims to unleash the potential of MSMEs to contribute to the SDGs in nine countries, Sri Lanka being one of them. One of the big priorities of these nine countries, including Sri Lanka, is to make policies and design programmes to increase the number of women in MSME work.

Jagwanth wants to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned from other countries around the world regarding MSME growth and development, and similarly share the experiences from Sri Lanka.

The government has done a number of initiatives in order to ensure MSME growth for vulnerable groups, including women, such as the new National Information and Entrepreneurship Strategy, and the Microfinance Act. DESA/DSDG is looking to help the government in implementation in these areas.

During her visit to Colombo, Jagwanth met with a number of UN agencies and senior officials in the government, including the UN Resident Coordinator Harana Singer, Industry and Commerce Ministry Textile Industry Development and SME Development Additional Secretary M. Thajudeen, National Enterprise Development Authority (NEDA) Chairman/ Director General Dhakshitha Bogollagama, National Policies and Economic Affairs Ministry Official Shiranthi Rathnayake and National Planning Director General Sanjaya Motalige, Central Bank of Sri Lanka International Operations Department Senior Assistant Director Chandranath Amarasiri, Policy Studies Institute Executive Director Dushni Weerakoon, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) Focal Point National Director in Sri Lanka Nawaz Rajabdeen, the World Bank and the Industrial Development Board.

There is significant interest on the part of the government to increase growth of the MSME sector and to ensure the development of synergies between MSME development and the achievement of the SDGs.

In particular, DESA/DSDG hopes that women may become more empowered, as countries now realise that an increase in women’s entrepreneurship is good for business and economic growth.

Increasing the capacity of women entrepreneurs has a significant potential to reduce poverty and inequality globally and DESA/DSDG stands ready to assist.