



## **Bridging the Gap Between International Environmental Commitments and National Implementation: A Critical Study of Mangrove Policy and Law in Sri Lanka**

**H.S.H Premasiri\***

*Supreme Court, Sri Lanka.*

*\*[samadhihansani20@gmail.com](mailto:samadhihansani20@gmail.com)*

Sri Lanka is a global biodiversity hotspot, home to thousands of species. Mangrove ecosystems in Sri Lanka play a critical role in contributing to the maintenance of a healthy and resilient environment. Despite their ecological and socio-economic importance, mangrove ecosystems in Sri Lanka continue to face significant degradation. The objectives of this research are to examine and address the gap between Sri Lanka's international commitments and their practical implementation in mangrove conservation, moving beyond paper-based solutions. This study adopts a black-letter legal research methodology, supplemented by qualitative documentary analysis, to critically examine the legal and institutional framework governing mangrove conservation in Sri Lanka. The study examines secondary legal sources such as relevant national Acts and international environmental agreements, academic literature, government reports, national policies, institutional publications, and reports from international organizations to assess Sri Lanka's implementation of its international environmental commitments. Sri Lanka is a party to several key international environmental agreements, including the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Paris Agreement. Nevertheless, a significant disparity persists between these international commitments and their effective domestic implementation, particularly in the context of mangrove conservation a range of indirect legal and policy frameworks has been established to support their conservation, and sustainable use such as the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance, Forest Ordinance, Coast Conservation and Coastal Resource Management Act, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act, and the National Strategic Action Plan. Although Sri Lanka has made notable progress in aligning its legal and policy framework, implementation remains inconsistent and fragmented, thereby limiting the overall effectiveness of mangrove protection efforts. The absence of a single institution with overall accountability for enforcement outcomes, coupled with inadequate inter-agency coordination, limited financial and technical resources, weak monitoring and compliance mechanisms, the limited deterrent effect of penalties for environmental offences, and insufficient public participation, has created a significant gap between the objectives of environmental law and policy and their practical implementation, leaving mangrove conservation largely confined to paper-based mechanisms. It recommends that a dedicated mangrove conservation statute or a specific legal framework for mangroves be considered to ensure uniform standards of protection, clearer legal obligations, and more effective enforcement mechanisms. While the National Mangrove Steering Committee currently serves as the primary coordination mechanism, its composition should be diversified to strengthen government involvement and facilitate broader participation. Strengthening this institutional framework, together with increased public awareness and meaningful community participation, would help bridge the gap between international commitments and their effective national implementation.

**Keywords:** *Mangrove, Policy and law, International commitments, National implementation, Biodiversity conservation*