



Statement by Sri Lanka

106th Council of the International Organization for Migration 24 - 27 November 2015, Geneva

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset let me congratulate Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrughe of Belgium on his election as the Chairperson for the 106th Council of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). We are confident that under your able leadership, we will have productive discussions. I also wish to thank Ambassador William Lacy Swing, the Director General of the IOM for his comprehensive report that focuses on 'continuity, coherence, and change'. Sri Lanka appreciates the work of the IOM, over six decades, as the lead Agency for migration in providing humanitarian aid and protection for migrants around the world.

International migration and human mobility is often described as a complex issues driven by a multitude of push and pull factors, that needs considered and concerted response at all levels. Unresolved internal migration and protracted displacements within countries due to conflicts, other socio-political factors, and climate change are the main root causes of international migration. Additionally, pull-factor driven causes such as better opportunities for economic prospects, have prompted an increasing number to migrate and very often tragic stories are associated with most of these unsafe, undocumented and irregular migration.

In Sri Lanka, the issue of internal migration, in particular the internal displacement that occurred during the three-decades long internal armed conflict, has been a primary concern to the Government, and extensive efforts are continuously being taken to address the needs of the IDPs. The Government is also mindful of making its cities resilient and sustainable, in view of the inevitable human mobility, despite the majority of its population continuing to live in the rural areas.

We note that in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are incorporated into the Development Agenda, migration cuts across several aspects of development. Migration and human mobility are included in four of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goal targets.

The significant role played by the IOM in actively contributing to the process of formulating the Post-2015 Development Agenda by advocating for migration to be recognized as an essential component of any future development framework and of national development policies and plans is much appreciated. As such there is now a better understanding of the links between international migration and development, highlighting that the development potential of migration has benefits for both societies and migrants that contributes to a sustainable development framework taking into full account of the potential of migration to assist poverty reduction. The Post-2015 Development Agenda offers a unique opportunity to comprehensively integrate migration into the global development strategy. It is an opportunity that should be vigorously pursued for the betterment of all humanity. We encourage IOM to actively engage in the process of implementation of these goals and developing the indicators related to migration.

Mr. Chairman,

The Colombo Process (CP), currently Chaired by Sri Lanka, comprises of eleven Asian countries that are also labour sending countries. We have been making collaborative efforts to foster orderly, safe, well managed and responsible migration for its skilled and semi-skilled work forces abroad, mainly to the GCC countries. Even though labour migration provides opportunities for migrants to find employment and improve their socio-economic status, our experiences shows that it also poses risks. These risks are encountered during recruitment, in the workplace and throughout the migration process in the country of origin, transit and destination. Hence, we believe that there is a need to manage the migration process to create a win-win situation for both the labour sending and receiving countries.

Sri Lanka was glad to have been able to share the CP's experience at the Global RCP Meeting held in Cairo in October 2015. At the recently concluded 3rd Senior Officials Meeting of the CP held in Colombo earlier this month, further agreement was reached to work on tangible actions on the five thematic areas identified in its road map, namely skills recognition, ethical labour recruitment, Pre-departure Orientation (PDOs), safer, faster and cheaper transfer of remittances and to develop a resource base on labour market trends. The CP also agreed to work on migration and health related issues under PDO, and to actively participate in the process of developing the indicators for implementing the migration related SDGs. The CP agreed on operationalizing a self-funding mechanism, which will ensure predictability to its regular work and meetings.

In this backdrop, Sri Lanka looks forward to participating at 3 important panel discussions - international humanitarian assistance in 2015 and IOM role; Sustainable Development Goals and the IOM Migration Governance Framework; and migration, human mobility and global health.

A special message will be made to the last panel discussion by H.E. Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka, who as Minister of Health in 2011, played a pioneering role in furthering the concept of "Migration & Health". Sri Lanka's national policy includes introduction of health assessment for resident visa applicants including labour migrants (as a receiving country) and ensuring access to emergency and primary health care, improving health access to labour migrants in host countries, a coordinated Care Plan for families left behind (before migration), improving quality of pre departure health assessments and ensuring health access to those with identified health issues, and improving pre departure orientation through inclusion of life skills for health improvement. In this context, we support the establishment of a formal forum to further deliberate on the issue of migration and health under the leadership of IOM. We are also pleased to subscribe to the Joint Statement delivered/to be delivered by Philippines at the Panel discussion on Migration, human mobility and global health.

In conclusion, we reiterate our commitment to foster support for migration that benefits both origin and destination countries.

Thank you.