

96th Council of the IOM, 2-5 December 2008

Statement made on behalf of Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to extend my congratulations to you on your election as the Chairman of the Ninety-sixth IOM Council, and to other members of the bureau on their election. I also wish to express appreciation to the previous bureau for their valuable efforts. My delegation congratulates the four new members on their admission to the IOM as observers.

My delegation appreciates the presentation made by the Director General highlighting the future of the IOM and the recommendations made by the Deputy Director General. I wish to express our gratitude to the Deputy Director General for the contributions that she has made for the work and progress of the IOM. Let me also thank the IOM for the assistance and the support that it has given to Sri Lanka and endorse our support to the organization.

Mr. Chairman,

Migration is a reality of the present world. The increasing movement of people across political borders into other countries for work is one of the most profound challenges of today's process of globalization. The challenge is not only for the receiving countries but also for the countries of origin. The developing countries, after investing heavily on skilled personnel in the fields of science, technology and other areas, loses this labour force, as a considerable number of skilled personnel, migrate for a better prospects. Furthermore, with the newly emerged world challenges, such as climate change, food crisis, prevailing talent deficient of the industrialized countries and also the current global financial crisis, the landscape of migration would change dramatically. In this light, the role that IOM can play is vital and significant in addressing the complexities of migration in a balanced manner.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka attaches a great importance to the issues and concerns of the International Migration. Therefore, the government of Sri Lanka has created a separate Ministry to focus mainly on this subject. The Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare recently formulated a new national policy aiming at the protection and welfare of all migrant workers.

Sri Lanka, in particular is concerned about the protection of the rights of migrants. In most countries migrant workers do not enjoy many rights. In this regard, Sri Lanka welcomes the initiative taken by the IOM in creating a dialogue and information sharing sessions on the topic of Human Rights and Migration through the international dialogue on migration for the year 2009.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Sri Lanka has been taking part, for the last few years, in several Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs) such as the Colombo Process and other recently initiated dialogue processes. These processes have created an opportunity for informal and non-binding dialogues and information exchange on migration. Regional Consultative Processes can create a conducive environment towards achieving binding bilateral and multilateral co-operation and in reaching agreements.

In this context, my delegation appreciates the important role played by the IOM and requests the IOM to revitalize the regional dialogue process as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

The government of Sri Lanka as a policy encourages migration for employment. As a result, Sri Lanka experiences many opportunities and challenges of circular migration and return migration. The two main facets of this issue are the re-integration to the socio-cultural fabric of the country and how to invest the savings in a useful manner of the returned migrants.

Although there are plenty of programmes, to train those who intend to migrate; there are very few initiatives to assist returnees for re-integration and investments. This is an area where the IOM together with the government can play a pro-active role by way of identifying existing

skills and needs of the returned migrants and assist them to invest in micro- enterprise sector. It would be also necessary to have sustainable mechanisms where the returnees could come back for further training, guidance and advice when ever they need.

Mr. Chairman,

Of particular concern to Sri Lanka in the area of migration is the plight of women workers migrating as household labour. Leaving their families, these women with minimum education and little or no exposure at all, become semi skilled migrant workers, anticipating a better life on their return. The Government of Sri Lanka having realized the serious social consequences of having large number of female migrant workers, certain remedial measures have put in place for the welfare of the children of these households. The assistance from the IOM in furthering these projects will be useful to ensure the welfare and well being of the families of these migrant workers.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, my delegation looks forward for a fruitful cooperation with the IOM and also wishes to thank the dedicated staff of the regional office of the IOM in Colombo.

Thank you.