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98th Session of the IOM Council, November 22-24, 2009

Statement by Sri Lanka

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, Sri Lanka wishes to extend congratulations to Ambassador Kitajima, the new Chair and other members of the Bureau on their election to the Council. Sri Lanka delegation also wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the outgoing Chair, Ambassador Mundaraín, for his excellent stewardship.

We wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador Swing, the Director General of the IOM, for his efficient leadership in driving this organization despite many challenges. My delegation welcomes the report by the Director General and thanks for his excellent presentation. Sri Lanka congratulates Ambassador Thompson on her election as the Deputy Director General of the organization and wishes to thank her for contributions so far.

Mr. Chairman,

Migration has now been accepted globally as an essential and inevitable component of the economic and social development of all States. Social and economic development indicators show that both countries of origin and destination are benefited through this phenomenon. Therefore, it is vital to recognize in the context of the current globalized economies, that migration has become an element which enables to alleviate poverty in the developing economies and filling gaps in the labour markets in the developed economies.

Sri Lanka has been a reliable source of migrant workers for the last two decades and over a million Sri Lankans are employed abroad. In the mid 1990's, the share of female migrant workers outnumbered the male participation and the ratio was 65% to 35%. This was mainly due to availability of employment opportunities in certain sectors only. In the recent past this scenario has changed and now the outflow is a more male dominated one, due to implementation of policies and by securing more employment opportunities in the male dominated sectors. In this regard, We wish to thank the IOM for assisting national authorities in formulation of policies in foreign employment sector. These policies paved way to enhance protection and welfare of Sri Lankan migrant workers by ensuring that migrant workers are adequately trained and informed about their rights and obligations in countries of destination and also improved job opportunities for in new markets.

Mr. Chairman,

Although the remittances from Sri Lankan migrant workers have grown dramatically over the past decade, it is expected to decrease in 2009 due to the world economic crisis. The role remittances play in development is not considered as a factor that has influenced the national development including absolute reduction of poverty. Remittances can reduce probability of food based and capability based poverty among families of migrant workers leading to relative reduction in poverty.

Sri Lanka has developed a comprehensive labour migration policy, with a view to managing labour migration properly and orderly and to address the challenges created locally and abroad. To tackle the external challenges in protecting and promoting rights of Sri Lankan migrant workers, Sri Lanka has been interacting with the labour receiving countries and entering or in the process of entering into bilateral arrangements. In addition, Sri Lanka continues to be an active partner

in international and regional migration processes including the recent GFMD event held in Athens.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka welcomes the efforts of the IOM in initiating International Dialogues on Migration in important areas such as human rights of migrants and effective respect for the human rights of migrant workers, where the human dimension of migration is highlighted.

One of the key challenges in the developing countries is preventing illegal migration and human trafficking. Due to economic factors and as well as pull factors in the developed world, many become victims of human traffickers. The chain of human traffickers should be tackled through effective networks of governments as they are established and sustained in both in the countries of origin and destination. Sri Lanka in this regard appreciate the hard work of the IOM and also appreciate the international dialogue on the trafficking of persons and exploitation of migrants which highlighted many perspectives of this issue.

Mr. Chairman,

Governments such as Sri Lanka require external assistance to implement successful migration management policies, especially in areas such as curbing human trafficking, etc. Some governments have introduced stringent measures, restricting regular admission of migrants in to their countries. The recent amendment to Sri Lanka's foreign employment Act is having an impact on curbing human trafficking from and via Sri Lanka. My delegation believes that one of the significant measures that need to be taken to tackle the issue is in fact poverty alleviation, while tracking down international criminal networks of traffickers, who exploit the victims.

It has been internationally established that the greatest single impact of climate change could be on human migration. It is predicted that climate refugees in future will be a major challenge to many of us. Internal displacement due to extreme weather conditions has been disturbing the social structures in our countries. Since the IOM is one of the leading organizations that operate in this field it can play a major role to effectively manage these realities that we can no longer ignore. My delegation appreciates that the fact that DG has already incorporated this dimension into the work of the organization through its new focus for the next budgetary years.

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to reiterate what we have said during agenda item 7.

the structures and processes in order to strengthen IOM's capacity to meet the new challenges. However, this has to be done in such a way that it does not negate the very purpose. In this regard, the concerns of South Asian region have to be taken into full consideration before implementing the suggested reforms. We are confident that acceptable solution would be reached satisfying the South Asia Region.

Sri Lanka firmly believes that it is through dialogue that the issues of circular migration could properly be addressed. With this believe, Sri Lanka took the leadership in initiating the Colombo Process in 2003 and requested the IOM to coordinate the process. The regional processes create opportunities to discuss issues relating to many sensitive aspects of migration in an informal environment. Sri Lanka hopes that this factor will be taken in to consideration in allocation of resources within the programmes in the IOM and look forward to DG's personal commitment in taking the leadership revitalizing the regional processes in this regard.

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In conclusion, the Sri Lankan delegation wishes to take this opportunity to convey its appreciation to the DG and the IOM for extending valuable assistance to Sri Lanka by implementing health projects to aid crisis-affected communities and in looking after our own Sri Lankan IDPs, who were forced to flee from the clutches of the LTTE.

Sri Lanka remains open and is ready for a constructive dialogue in the up coming other agenda items in the council

Thank you.