

Statement at the 99th Session of the IOM Council

Mr. Chairman,

Please allow me to join previous speakers in extending our warmest congratulations to you (Ambassador Jazairy) and members of the Bureau on your election and I wish to assure you our fullest cooperation to you in fulfilling your responsibilities. May I take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to Ambassador Kitajima of Japan for his wise leadership and to the members of the Bureau.

We would like to welcome the new members namely Lesotho, Central African Republic, Timor-Leste, Botswana and Swaziland and the new observers as well.

We extend our condolences as well to families of the IOM staff who lost their lives while serving the needy people.

The Sri Lanka delegation wishes to thank Ambassador Swing, the Director General, for his opening remarks and for his report. I must congratulate him for his stewardship and number of members and observers of the IOM bear testimony to his achievement.

Mr. Chairman,

It is necessary to acknowledge and appreciate the assistance of IOM and its donors, through its various programmes projects, providing humanitarian assistance to IDPs due to natural disasters, victims of trafficking, etc. and by conducting training and capacity building initiatives.

In Sri Lanka, the IOM in coordination with the Government of Sri Lanka and other stake holders has been assisting resettlement of IDPs in their home districts in the North and East of the country. Assistance of the IOM included transportation of 230,000 IDPs to their home districts, early recovery and livelihood support, information, counseling and referral services project. Transport assistance was also provided to relief agencies, NGOs and other partners to move relief and reconstruction material and to and from affected areas.

Mr. Chairman,

Migration is an inevitable and essential phenomenon in the history of humankind. It is regrettable that migration is negatively characterized in political campaigns and sensationalized by media in some States and migrants are increasingly viewed as obstacles for development. As legal migration opportunities and jobs are dwindling, migrants are at a higher risk to experience exploitation, discrimination and xenophobia. It is vital to recognize contributions of migrants to economic growth and human development in both the developed and the developing world.

We believe that it is necessary to facilitate legal migration, while addressing the root causes of irregular migration. We encourage the IOM to continue to do its good work by conducting dialogue under various topics related to migration among States of origin, transit and destination. We note that more emphasis is given to voluntary return and reintegration programme and more budgetary allocations are earmarked for this purpose. It is important equal consideration and allocations should be afforded other migration related issues.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka has been a regular partner in international dialogues and regional migration processes. The Colombo Process is scheduled to hold its Ministerial Consultations early next year in Dhaka, and we wish to acknowledge the support being provided by the IOM in this regard. Sri Lanka participated at the recently concluded 4th Global Forum on Migration and Development held in Puerto Vallarta, at Ministerial level and co-chaired the roundtable discussion on 'Reducing the costs of migration and maximizing human development', along with Sweden and the UAE. The participants have shared their valuable experiences in this area. We wish to congratulate Mexico for hosting this important event successfully.

I thank you Mr. Chairman