



**The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations and International
Organizations in Geneva**

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Informal thematic session on “International cooperation and governance of migration in all its dimensions including at borders, on transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration”

Panel discussion 1

**On International cooperation and governance of migration in all its dimensions
19th June 2017**

Statement by

**H.E Ravinatha Aryasinha
Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka**

(Check against delivery)

Mr. Moderator, Distinguish delegates,

At the outset, Sri Lanka appreciates the valuable insight provided to the discussion today by the panellists and for the useful issue brief by the Office of the Special Representative of the UNSG on International Migration.

We support the view that the foundation for well-managed migration governance is national level policy coherence. The effort within the GCM thematic consultations must aim at gathering evidence based information on those policies that has worked well. We also need to enter into candid dialogue on what has not worked and at the same time to understand the challenges in implementing a 'whole of government' approach to address issues related to migration. In particular the mechanisms and policies in implementing the migration related SDGs by 2030.

Our focus in Sri Lanka over the past several decades has been to address the issues related to outward migration due to a variety of reasons including the conflict affected displacements and economic reasons. Sri Lanka has made considerable efforts at national level to improve national migration governance in contractual labour migration, it also has engaged in return and readmission processes through a number of bilateral agreements with the support of IOM. In our experience, we have recognized the importance of consolidated data, disaggregated on age, gender and regional levels, where work has been conducted to a certain degree. For example, in the Foreign Ministry Consular Services Division, we have started upgrading its digital connectivity with other stakeholder agencies of the Government and believe such modification could effectively and efficiently respond to requirements of Sri Lankan migrants. Sri Lanka also has taken proactive steps to adopt a national migration health policy and **we support health being an important part of migration governance and in the final outcome of the GCM.**

To support the national level policy coherence, our submission to this panel is that **there should be support for developing countries in their efforts in identifying an addressing policy gaps in the area of migration and encourage to build synergies across government.** In Sri Lanka's experience, we have been able to achieve results through the establishment of a Task Force on preventing trafficking in persons, thereby reducing the risk of irregular migration. Sri Lanka has also developed and launched a Sub Policy and National Action Plan on Return and Reintegration of Migrant Workers in year 2015 covering social and economic integration of return labour migrants and to effectively address the welfare needs under the programme called "Sharmika Surekuma".

Mr. Moderator,

Our active engagement in the **regional consultative processes on contractual labour** migration has helped further strengthen the **national efforts and to orient them to deliver collectively.** The Colombo Process (CP) and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) are two such voluntary regional platforms that has opened opportunity for us - the Member States to harmonise policies, and secure increased Government to Government cooperation between sending and receiving countries, to promote safe, regular and orderly labour migration in the Asia-GCC migration corridor.

As the immediate former Chair of the **Colombo Process (CP)** - a voluntary regional Consultative process of 12 Asian Contractual Labour Sending Countries, during the 3 ½ years of our

leadership to the Forum, we were able to bring practical action oriented measures on five key areas related to migration governance, namely on 'ethical labour recruitment', skills development and recognition, 'remittances', pre-departure orientation and empowerment', 'labour market trends and analysis'. We are pleased to state that the experts of the Colombo Process Member States now continue to meet regularly online and face-to-face to discuss and share experience through the thematic area working groups established under these five areas. More recently we were also able to build a networking platform among the labour and consular attaches in the GCC to help them better understand and exchange information on situations in destination countries, in particular to respond in crisis situation, with the meeting held in Kuwait in May 2017 with the support of IOM and the Secretariat of Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative (MICIC). This consular support network will be helpful in supporting the Asian labour migrants with post-arrival orientation and assistance in any distress and in welfare.

I wish to outline some of the main achievements in the Asia Region which has brought greater collaboration not only among labour sending countries in Asia but also to bring in cooperation with the labour receiving countries in the GCC through the **Abu Dhabi Dialogue, which Sri Lanka Chairs** now. The whole engagement among the **Colombo Process (CP)** Labour sending countries was based on the principle of relative strength of Member States and accordingly five different CP countries led the areas.

In the area of **skills and qualification recognition processes** led by Sri Lanka, the CP identified this as a crucial priority in ensuring that our CP nationals do not have to accept jobs that are below their skill levels, thus paving the way for better employment terms and conditions. We have made small but concrete steps in this regard.

- A pilot project launched between a country of destination (COD) and countries of origin (COO), skills certification in the construction, catering and electrical sectors in the UAE and Kuwait as destination countries and India, Pakistan, Philippines Bangladesh and Sri Lanka as labour sending countries joined this project.
- Furthermore, a national assessment of labour market trends and skills profiles of a selection of migrant construction workers going to the GCC has been completed; and a detailed mapping of all the different skills assessment and certification standards between countries of origin and destination, which has resulted in important recommendations on how CP workers can be trained for more niche markets in the GCC and gain a competitive edge over workforces from non-CP origin countries.

In the area of **Ethical Recruitment practices** led by Bangladesh, we are pleased to note the significant commitments to global priorities on lowering the costs of recruitment of migrants, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Focus in this area has been on ensuring more protection from unscrupulous employers and recruitment agencies, less exposure to labour exploitation and trafficking, and the abolition of practices such as extortionate fees and confiscation of passports. Some of the key deliverables in this area have been;

- **First**, the CP has encouraged and promoted a culture change in the private sector, by supporting the Overseas Employment Service Providers- Alliance of Asian Associations (OESPAAA) - a network of lead recruitment industry representatives from each CP country, and supported their Fourth Regional Conference in March 2016. The

conference gave the recruitment industry an opportunity to reinforce their commitment to ethical recruitment practices as a common objective through enhanced partnership with the Colombo Process. Under the SDC-funded regional project in support of the CP thematic priorities, IOM facilitated the OESPAAA in convening two sub regional consultations to advance the recruitment industry's actions towards ethical recruitment. OESPAAA representatives were invited to the CP events, including the 3rd SOM and the First Symposium on Ethical Recruitment. Through the sub regional consultations, OESPAAA has agreed to work towards building capacities of OESPAAA members on international standards and instruments on ethical recruitment.

- **Second**, we were also able to hold the first of a series of symposiums for CP Member States and recruitment stakeholders to discuss ways to promote regulatory harmonization in the field of ethical recruitment on 23rd August 2016 in Colombo. A follow-up session took place on 18 May 2017 under the current Chair of the CP, Nepal. This series of symposiums will lead to the production of a synthesis report with solid recommendations to promote regulatory harmonization of recruitment intermediaries within the CPMS and with CODs.
- **Third**, two countries of origin in the CP region, namely India and Nepal, were part of a research project on the labour recruitment industry in the UAE, conducted by IOM Kuwait with the support of SDC through the CP, commissioned by the UAE and was presented to the recent Abu Dhabi Dialogue Ministerial meeting in January 2017.
- And **fourth**, standard terms of employment for domestic workers are currently being developed, again with the support of SDC and UN Women.

On **Pre-departure Orientation and Empowerment (PDOE)** led by the Philippines, already forms an important component of the labour migration policies of many states and therefore has a specific focus within the CP as well. Together with our collective effort, we have been able to;

- Develop a draft Regional Guide for the pre-departure orientation modules and Programme Management system, with the support of IOM and SDC. We wish to thank the Philippines for their CIOP initiative (Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programme). Up to seven module guides have been developed under this, ranging from Remedies in Cases of Distress and Crises Situations; right through to Health Management while Working Abroad. The CIOP initiative is now taken forward under the leadership of ADD and the Regional Guide on PDO, together with post arrival orientation, will be rolled out through the select pairing of COOs and CODs of the ADD Member States.

In the area of **promoting cheaper, faster & safer transfer of remittances** led by Pakistan, during the 3rd SOM, Member States reiterated their continued support for global efforts to reduce remittance transfer costs to 3%. They also agreed to step up national-level efforts to empower migrant workers and their families on remittance management and utilization.

On the last thematic area of **enhancing the capacities of the CP countries to track labour market trends and research** led by Thailand, it helps in determining what type of skills training should be prioritised and relates closely to the other thematic areas, not just skills recognition but also pre-departure orientation and ethical recruitment. Keeping this in view,

- A Regional Workshop on Labour Market Research was held on 1 June 2016, which had contributions from experts from China, Malaysia, IOM's Kuwait office as well as other CP states.
- The facilities in the CP website have been improved and expanded in order to become an online repository and a knowledge forum whereby Member States can share vital information on the five thematic areas including labour market trends. The newly designed website provides an excellent platform for colleagues to share this information through a restricted access portal.
- In addition, discussions are underway within the CP to operationalise the agreement reached at the 3rd SOM, for the production of a Labour Market Research Operational Guide as the next step.
- Following an initial round of face to face consultations held by Thematic Area Working Groups (TAWG) last year, a second round of meetings in four areas has already been conducted via the online video conference tool, Bluejeans between December 2016-February 2017, and the meeting minutes have been made available in the restricted interface of the CP Website. The fifth area, TAWG on Labour market analysis met for their second meeting on 30 March 2017. The common objectives of the second round meetings were: to discuss and agree on draft Terms of Reference (ToRs) specific to each TAWG; and, to engage in further discussions on good practices from national and regional level initiatives.

With this experience Sri Lanka accepted the invitation to be the current **Chair of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD)** - which is a migration fora of both labour sending and labour receiving countries.

The Colombo Statement adopted during the 4th ADD Ministerial meeting held in January 2017 in Sri Lanka, it was agreed to pursue implementation in four concrete areas, which are also referred to as important elements in migration governance in the issue brief of today's discussion;

1. **Ethical Labour recruitment** - A new model that can be applied across the GCC-Asia corridor based on the ILO voluntary '**principles and guidelines on fair recruitment**' is being considered and is expected to enhance transparency, and joint oversight by both destination and origin countries. It will also enable to exchange information on the recruiters and employers and the labour contracts will be an essential element.
2. **Skills certification and mutual recognition** - the ADD has already launched a pilot project covering construction industry. Many countries in the GCC-Asia corridor has developed National Level Vocational Training Qualifications, and occupational skills standards. A **skills passport system** is on the pipe line for future consideration. This policy will enable the workers to improve their qualifications and the possibility to get the qualification recognized when the worker returns to country of origin.

3. **Use of technology to facilitate and improve the outcomes of labour mobility**- Advance technology will be introduced to enhance the effectiveness and transparency of the recruitment system, where there will be accountability on both sides.
4. **Global consultations on the adoption of a Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration** - The ADD has also been actively pursuing the discussions under global consultations towards the adoption of a Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, considering the potential of significantly enhancing the development outcomes of labour mobility by acting to improve its governance”, and to improve migrant protection, as well as to develop sound and effective solutions to the challenges faced by labour mobility that can be shared with the rest of the world. A two-day workshop will be held in Dubai from 5-6 July which can derive useful input to the GCM process.

Mr. Moderator,

Challenges do exist at any level of migration governance. However, collective efforts within Government agencies as well as between countries of origin and countries of destination can contribute to overcome those challenges gradually, as we have seen with the progress of CP and the ADD providing more opportunities for safe and regular migration for employment.

We also recognise the important role played by the ILO in this connection, and welcome the general discussion held at the 106th International Labour Conference which concluded last week, and take note of the conclusions adopted last Friday.

Before conclusion we once again wishes to highlight the important role the RCPs could play in adopting common standards and practices to harmonise labour migration policies, and thereby promote regular migration. In this regard, we encourage that this role is duly reflected in the GCM as an important element in improving migration governance.

Thank you.