



47<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council

**Agenda Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants**

**Statement by the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**

Madam President,

Sri Lanka notes the report presented by the Special Rapporteur on 'means to address the human rights impact of pushbacks of migrants on land and at sea'.

In this context, we wish to draw this Council's attention to the critical challenges faced by migrant workers, particularly during the current pandemic situation.

The remittances of migrant workers who comprise 3.5% of the world's population, contribute to the socio-economic development of communities and societies, lifting millions out of poverty, raising standards of living and providing access to health services, nutrition, education and housing. [According to the World Bank, remittance flows to low and middle income countries were US \$ 540 in 2020, only 1.6% lower than the US\$548 recorded in 2019.]

Unfortunately, migrant workers have been adversely and disproportionately affected due to the pandemic with loss of employment, reduced wages, eviction from the country of employment, stigmatization on account of posing a health risk, discrimination, denial of medical assistance and inability to travel due to border closures and restrictions.

International attention and appropriate responses are required to safeguard the human and labour rights of this vulnerable group. States have an obligation to protect migrants and migrant workers without discrimination, even during times of public health crises and provide them with access to health care including screening, testing and medical assistance, vaccines, regardless of their status. Such cooperation between states as per the International Health Regulations (IHRs) on health checks and screening prior to repatriation can significantly control outbreaks of disease.

Madam President,

As a country of origin for over one million migrant workers, Sri Lanka has provided high priority to the welfare and rights of this group.

The approach adopted by the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) in containing the pandemic, which was also commended by the World Health Organisation, has been

inclusive, non-discriminatory and holistic, providing foremost importance to safeguarding the health and safety of not only its people but foreign nationals in its territory.

As founding Chair of the Colombo Process established in 2003 with focus on the protection from abusive practices in recruitment and employment and provision of services to migrant workers, as well as Chair from 2013 to 2017, Sri Lanka has taken tangible action towards the welfare of migrant workers, particularly in the area of migrant health.

However, much remains to be done to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers in this unprecedented situation. These include addressing immediate and long term challenges such as ensuring migrant's right to health, social and economic re-integration, livelihood options and possible opportunities for re-migration, providing decent working conditions, and social protection.

We call for enhanced efforts by this Council and the UN system, and for strengthening of solidarity at national, regional and international levels to successfully overcome these challenges.

I thank you.