



**Statement by H.E.A.L.A. Azeez, Ambassador and  
Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the UN  
109<sup>th</sup> Council of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
27-30 November 2018  
Geneva**

Chairperson,  
Your Excellency Mr. Negash Botora  
(Ambassador of Ethiopia)

Director-General Antonio Vitorino,  
Deputy Director General Madam Laura Thompson,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chairperson, for your well-deserved election and, also your bureau. Our deep appreciation goes to Ambassador of Chili for the excellent work undertaken in the past year. Mr. Chairperson, your able guidance of deliberations during this 109<sup>th</sup> Session, in an year that marks a turning point in the global migration governance, is much valued and keenly looked upto.

We also convey our pleasure and congratulations to Director- General Mr. Vitorino, for his appointment, and thank for him for the comprehensive statement he made today, elaborating his vision for IOM – as a related organization of the UN family. Director General Mr. Vitorino, you have an unenviable task before you with new responsibilities bestowed upon the IOM as the leader of the Global Migration Network. We look forward to the discussion on this subject, assuring Sri Lanka's consistent and steadfast support and cooperation. Also, we are pleased to welcome Uzbekistan as a new Member of the IOM.

The former DG Mr. William Lacy Swing deserves our very sincere appreciation for his visionary leadership for over a decade and for all pragmatic steps he had taken to strengthen IOM's relations with UN and other stakeholders Ambassador Lacy demonstrated deep passion and humaneness in his pursuit to make migration a genuine choice, globally.

Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

In June this year, the UN General Assembly in New York, following an extensive process of consultations and open negotiation, agreed to a global framework for migration management - that is safe, orderly and regular. Increasing complexities associated with migration in terms of root causes, mixed nature of migration flows, and capacities of States – most of the time inadequate to make timely and effective responses - have made the pursuit of migration a risky operation. The negative, and often hostile, narrative has outdone the socio-economic development benefits of migration to societies in places of origin, transit and destination. Resultantly, the rights, wellbeing and protection of migrants remain yet to be fully appreciated and respected.

In this context, the path we have come so far to Marrakesh becomes significant. We think however it is not the end –but the beginning of the real work. The two co-facilitators from Mexico and Switzerland, together with the UNSG's Special Representative Madam Louis Arbour, have guided the process only to leave all of us with an integrated framework for action. Sri Lanka was closely following and actively engaging during the GCM, both in its national capacity and as the current Chair of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) - a Regional Consultative Process (RCP) of both the labour sending and labour receiving countries. We wish to endeavor in the best possible way, to take the process to the next level as an RCP in implementation, and to contribute actively to discussions on modalities for follow-up and review next year.

We urge all countries, specially those which have for decades valued and sustained migration as a source of national economic advancement, to unreservedly endorse the Global Compact for Migration. This is no time to ditch. It is time to show resolve, good will and commitments.

Mr. Chairperson,

Sri Lanka is pleased that labour migration is deeply entrenched in the 23 elements of the Compact, and many of us, in our national policies and programmes as well collectively in regional processes, have been working on several of the action points in this area. So, the Compact in a way is a recast, in a comprehensive form, of what most of us have been engaged in, and it has generated a renewed vigour and global focus. The compact also provides us with a platform to consolidate our experiences, expertise, and best practices, and allows us to address challenges together, where partnerships would play a pivotal role, be it North-South or South-South. As the GCM is rooted in achieving the SDGs, it makes it more relevant to look at how effectively implementation can take place, considering the respective regional dynamics and priorities. Interactions among the different regional processes have

enriched our views and knowledge on various aspects of migration. In September this year, personally I had the privilege of engaging with the Almaty Process 5<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials Meeting held in Bishkek-Kyrgyzstan over video-link on behalf of the ADD.

As a member of the Colombo Process and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, Sri Lanka will endeavor to engage with all other partners proactively and candidly as we do within our own region- in the Asia-GCC corridor, that generates a yearly migration flow of over 2.5 million people. As the Chair of the ADD we participated in an assessment conducted by the IOM on the 'role of inter-State consultation mechanisms on migration (ISCMs) in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. We hope it will help us in getting an assessment as to where the regional mechanisms add value and vibrancy to the implementation process. The ADD has concrete evidence-based inputs on managing labour migration as an alternative pathway for irregular migration. These include in particular, strengthening skills development and mutual recognition, ethical recruitment, comprehensive information orientation programme as part of Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO), and using advance technologies to improve transparency, and effectiveness and to prevent abuses in the migration process.

Mr.Chairperson,

In its national endeavours, Sri Lanka has pursued a rights-based approach to the issue of migration, including urging for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and the Welfare of their Families. The National Action Plan for Human Rights (2016-2021) has a pronounced focus on the rights of migrants. Sri Lanka has been active on the issue of the migrant health, and by involving 13 key stakeholder agencies, the Ministry of Health has developed and launched a National Migration Health Policy recognizing the needs of out-bound, internal and in-bound migrant populations. It includes policy responses as well as a detailed action plan of strategies and measures to address these needs.

While we look into new and innovative ways of tackling the challenges of human mobility, in particular those related to irregular migration, we require closer cooperation to combat trafficking in and human smuggling, as well as to provide technical assistance to improve capacities in the areas of intelligence gathering, and sharing, investigation and prosecutorial skills, risk analysis, and victim support. The scope of victim support includes medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid, return and reintegration support etc. In Sri Lanka a multi-stakeholder national level Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force led by the Ministry of Justice is implementing a Strategic National Action Plan

(2015-2019) based on four-Ps, Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership. An Anti-Trafficking Unit has been set up in the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau to generate awareness and build the capacity of partners. As a Party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol), Sri Lanka is committed to further improving implementation, through practical measures.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairperson,

We appreciate the close bilateral relations between IOM and Sri Lanka, both at the Headquarters level and through the IOM country office. We note the proposed 2019 budget support to projects on facilitation of sustainable return and reintegration.

Thank you.