



**Statement by Mr.G.S. Withanage
Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Employment, Sri Lanka and
Chair in Office of the Colombo Process
at the Fifth Global Meeting of Chairs and Secretaries of Regional
Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs)
Cairo, Egypt, 21-22 October 2015**

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka welcomes this opportunity to participate in the Fifth Global Meeting of Chairs and Secretaries of Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs) organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This interaction provides us a platform to share experiences and exchange views on the values and benefits of cooperation and dialogue on migration among the different RCPs.

Mr. Chairman,

The Colombo Process (CP) is a regional grouping of 11 countries in Asia, that are mainly originating and managing contractual labour. The CP seeks to provide its member states- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, with a regional platform to engage in dialogue and exchange good practices on issues related to contractual labour migration. There is an estimated overseas worker population of 45 million of Asian origin which grows in numbers and diversity in terms of destination and source countries. Their contribution is increasingly felt regionally and internationally.

The CP was a response to the demand of several sending States. It was inaugurated at a Ministerial Meeting in 2003 in Colombo, and thus came to be described as the CP. So far the CP has met at Ministerial level in Manila- Philippines, Bali - Indonesia and Dhaka - Bangladesh in 2004, 2005 and 2011 respectively. In essence, CP countries have sought to address the challenges and associated opportunities related to the protection and welfare aspects of migrant workers, by strengthening cooperation with other labour sending countries in the region.

Since assuming the position of Chair-in-Office of the CP in October 2013, Sri Lanka has spearheaded a Strategic Vision/Road map that seeks to strengthen engagement with countries of destination under the theme "International Labour Migration for Prosperity: Adding Value by Working Together", under five thematic areas of focus;

- i. Develop a Qualification Recognition Processes including transnational accreditation and monitoring**
- ii. Promote Cheaper, Faster & Safer Transfer of Remittances**
- iii. Ethical Labour Recruitment Practices (including promoting Standard Employment Contracts)**

iv. Effective Pre-departure Orientation & Empowerment

v. Enhancing capacities of the Colombo Process participating countries to track labour market trends and the setting up of the Colombo Process Migration Resource Centre (CPMRC) in support of CP goals.

Sri Lanka with IOM assistance has developed detailed action plans containing the objectives, envisaged tangible actions, and timelines for expected outcomes on each of these 5 thematic areas, with the intention of operationalizing these action points by mid-2016, when the CP Ministerial Meeting is to be held. We wish to acknowledge the support provided in this context by the IOM and its partners, particularly the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC).

Conscious of the need to strengthen the synergies between international migration and development at the global, regional and national levels, over the past 2 years, the CP has also advocated that **due recognition be given to migration as a priority in the post-2015 development agenda**. The CP is happy to note that while the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) did not contain any target setting on migration and development, that clear targets and modified global action to improve the migration process is contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. Of the targets set out relating to migration in the Agenda, it is noteworthy that the CP has already made considerable headway in seeking to operationalize areas of "reduction of the transaction costs of migrants", "facilitation of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people through the implementation of planned well managed migration policies" and "the protection of labour rights and the promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment".

Additionally, under the Sri Lanka chair, efforts have been made to ensure that **tangible benefits accrue to the membership of the CP, through Cooperation within the Abu-Dhabi Dialogue (ADD)** in order to enhance cooperation with destination countries in the Gulf region. Assistance has been received by the CP membership through two ADD initiatives that were discussed at the ADD Ministerial Meeting in November 2014. The first project is a pilot project related to skills development, certification, upgrading and recognition that involves UAE, Kuwait, Philippines, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The other pilot project is the Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programme for Migrant Workers (CIOP), which will develop best practice modules related to pre-departure and post-arrival orientation.

Also in order to enhance the **CP's cooperation with the EU**, the third Asia-EU Dialogue was held in Colombo following the 2nd SOM from 15-16 October 2014. The two day meeting was focused on discussions on access to EU markets in semi-skilled and skilled categories; labour market assessments in Europe; policy aspects and regulation of labour migration to Europe; enhancing the employability of Asian skilled labour and professionals in the EU market; practical tools to promote labour migration between Asia and EU; and good practices in Asia-EU Labour Migration. It has been proposed that the next Asia-EU Dialogue be held in Spring 2016, prior to the CP Ministerial Meeting in Colombo.

The CP is also working towards **enhancing cooperation between the CP and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)** and other migration related forums.

Over the past 18 months the CP has also devoted considerable effort to **develop a self-funding mechanism** based on modest contributions from the membership and also drawing on similar and replicable experiences of the various other RCPs. This will not only ensure predictability and regularity of CP meetings, but also encourage countries to accept the leadership of the CP, thus ensuring the smooth rotation of the CP Chair. The proposed measure will require the amending of the operating modalities that governs the CP.

Mr Chairman,

The CP is scheduled to have its third SOM on 4 - 5 November 2015 in Colombo, where it will take stock of the progress achieved in the five thematic areas under Sri Lanka's Chairmanship and discuss how to further the implementation of the particular action points above.

In conclusion, in our efforts at finding solutions to the problems encountered by migrants all over the globe, we need better coordination and the exchange of best practices at the national, regional and inter-regional levels. I believe that during this two day meeting, we would be able to discuss and find possible solutions, in particular with respect to how global migration challenges could be addressed effectively in our regions.

I thank you.