



**Statement by H.E. Ravinatha Aryasinha
Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to United Nations in
Geneva**

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset let me congratulate Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrugghe of Belgium on his election as the Chairperson for the 106th Council of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and for his leadership in steering our discussions. We thank Ambassador William Lacy Swing, the Director General of the IOM for his comprehensive report focusing on 'continuity, coherence, and change'. We appreciate the work of the IOM as the lead Agency for migration for over six decades in partnering for humanitarian and protection needs of migrants around the world, which we note has exceeded 232 million international and 740 million internal migrants¹.

Thus international migration and human mobility is often described as complex issues driven by a multitude of push and pull factors, which needs considered and concerted response at all levels. Unresolved internal migration and protracted displacements within countries due to conflicts, other socio-political factors, and climate change have been the main root causes for international migration. Additionally, pull-factor driven causes such as better opportunities for economic prospects, have prompted an increasing number to migrate and very often tragic stories are associated with most of these unsafe, undocumented and irregular migration.

In Sri Lanka, the issue of internal migration, in particular the internal displacement that occurred during the three-decades long internal armed conflict, has been a primary concern to the Government, where extensive efforts are being continued to address the needs of the IDPs. The Government is also mindful of making its cities resilient and sustainable, in view of the inevitable human mobility, despite the majority of its population continuing to live in the rural areas.

We note that in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are incorporated into the Development Agenda, migration cuts across several aspects of development. These include improving the quality of human mobility through "well-managed migration policies", as well as addressing health issue in a comprehensive manner in order to be responsive to human mobility, displacement among issues related to peaceful and inclusive societies and Disaster Risk Reduction, address trafficking in a comprehensive manner and action by Finance for Development Action Agenda which deals with remittances.

¹http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_initiatives2015.pdf

I wish to mention here the significant role played by the IOM in actively contributing to the process of formulating the Post-2015 Development Agenda by advocating for migration to be recognized as an essential component of any future development framework and of national development policies and plans. Through this work it has been able to contribute to a better understanding of the links between international migration and development in order to highlight the development potential of migration for the benefit of both societies and migrants and to contribute to a sustainable development framework that takes full account of the potential of migration to assist poverty reduction. The Post-2015 Development Agenda offers a unique opportunity to comprehensively integrate migration into the global development strategy. It is an opportunity that should be vigorously perused for the betterment of all of humanity. We encourage IOM to actively engage in the process of implementation of these goals and developing the indicators related to migration.

Mr. Chairman,

As a group of eleven Asian labour sending countries, the Colombo Process (CP) which is currently being Chaired by Sri Lanka has been making collaborative efforts to foster orderly, safe, well managed and responsible migration for its skilled and semi-skilled work forces abroad, mainly to the GCC countries. Even though labour migration provides opportunities for migrants to find employment and improve their socio-economic status, our experiences shows that it also poses risks such as those encountered during recruitment, in the workplace and throughout the migration process in the country of origin, transit and destination. Hence we believe there is a need to manage the migration process in a manner that it will be a win-win situation for both labour sending and receiving countries.

Sri Lanka was glad to have been able to share the CP's experience at the Global RCP Meeting held in Cairo in October 2015, while at the CP's at its recently concluded 3rd Senior Officials Meeting in Colombo in November 2015 further agreement was reached to work on tangible actions on the five thematic areas identified in its road map, namely skills recognition, ethical labour recruitment, Pre-departure Orientation (PDOs), safer, faster and cheaper transfer of remittances and to develop a resource base on labour market trends. The CP also agreed to work on migration and health related issues under PDO, and to actively participate in the process of developing the indicators for implementing the migration related SDGs. The CP agreed on operationalizing a self-funding mechanism, which will ensure predictability to its regular work and meetings, to strengthen its operational modalities, and to have enhanced cooperation with other groups, including with the ADD, the EU through the Asia-EU Dialogue and the GFMD.

In this backdrop, Sri Lanka looks forward to participating in 3 important panel discussions which are very close to us as individual countries and in our collective efforts - international humanitarian assistance in 2015 and IOM role; Sustainable Development Goals and the IOM Migration Governance Framework; and migration, human mobility and global health.

A special message will be made to the latter panel discussion by Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, who as Minister of Health in 2011, played a pioneering role in furthering this concept. Sri Lanka's national policy includes introduction of health assessment for resident visa applicants including labour migrants (as a receiving country) and ensuring access to emergency and primary health care, improving health access to labour migrants in host countries, a coordinated Care Plan for families left behind (before migration), improving quality of pre departure health assessments and ensuring health access to those with identified health issues, and improving pre departure orientation through inclusion of life skills for health improvement. In this context, we support the establishment of a formal forum to further deliberate on the issue of migration and health under the leadership of IOM. We are also pleased to subscribe to the Joint Statement delivered/to be delivered by Philippines at the Panel discussion on Migration, human mobility and global health.

Mr. Chairman,

We also wish to sincerely thank the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as well as bilateral partners including the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD), and international organizations such as the ILO and the World Bank for extending technical and financial assistance to Sri Lanka and to the Colombo Process for achieving the tangible results which have helped enhance a better life for the migrants from our region.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, we reiterate our commitment to foster support for migration that benefits both origin and destination countries.

Thank you.