



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Press Release

Colombo Process meeting concludes with far reaching decisions aimed at ensuring skilled and safe labour migration from Asia

Colombo, Sri Lanka – A two-day Senior Officials' Meeting of the Colombo Process (CP)¹ held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 4-5 November 2015 has resulted in far reaching concrete decisions and recommendations aimed at advancing collective efforts for safe and skilled labour migration management by sending countries in Asia. These include the setting up of a Colombo Process Technical Support Unit (CP TSU) in Colombo, to provide support to all the CP countries in pursuing the goals and actions set in the current thematic priorities of the CP and any other areas that the CP would agree to in the future.

Hon. Ms. Thalatha Atukorale, Minister of Foreign Employment of Sri Lanka and Chair-in-Office of the Colombo Process delivering the key note address emphasized the importance of migrant workers' contributions to economic development in both home and host countries. She reiterated Sri Lanka's commitment as CP Chair-in-Office to work towards the well being of all migrant workers of Asia, and to leverage the support of other Regional Migration Processes, as well as regional and international groups of nations and civil societies to achieve this goal.

Earlier in introductory comments, Mr. G.S. Withanage, Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Employment of Sri Lanka highlighted the theme of the Sri Lankan Chairmanship of the CP, "International Labour Migration for Prosperity: Adding Value by Working Together and the focus of the CP to protect and uphold the rights of migrant workers in the region". H.E. Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha, the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the UN in Geneva in his capacity as the Chair of the Geneva-based CP Member States, highlighted the effective collaboration and action-oriented role of the CP Geneva-based Permanent Representatives and experts to develop concrete

¹ The CP is a Regional Consultative Process on the management of overseas employment and contractual labour for countries of origins in Asia. It aims to provide a forum for Asian labour sending countries to share experiences, lessons learned and best practices on overseas employment. The CP Member States include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. This was the third Senior Officials' Meeting of the Colombo Process hosted by the Government of Sri Lanka with technical and financial assistance from the International Organization for Migration as the Secretariat of the Colombo Process.

Remittances from foreign employment are a significant component in macro-economic stability and poverty alleviation. The total remittances received by labour sending countries globally are estimated at USD 450 billion, gained from about 230 million migrant workers. Asia has both fifty percent of the remittance market as well as migrant workers.

actions and deliverables to improve the lives of migrant workers through five thematic areas. He said during Sri Lanka's chairmanship, beyond the tangible results from the identified areas for cooperation, the CP had also strengthened its operational modalities, worked towards self funding, and also enhanced cooperation with other groups, including with the ADD, the EU through the Asia-EU Dialogue, and the GFMD. He said the CP countries had shown that being competitors for the same markets and competing national interests had not stood in the way of collective action, and that contrary to the conventional wisdom, cooperation in the field of migration must not necessarily be a 'zero-sum-game'.

Sri Lanka's chairmanship of the CP over the past two years has focused on five thematic areas:

1. Qualification and skills recognition processes
2. Fostering ethical recruitment
3. Effective pre-departure orientation and empowerment
4. Reducing the costs of remittance transfer
5. Enhancing capacities of the Colombo Process Member States to track labour market trends

During the meeting which was hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Employment of Sri Lanka with technical and financial assistance from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), active discussions took place among the representatives of the CP Member States on these five thematic areas, regards which detailed action plans containing the objectives, envisaged tangible actions, and timelines for expected outcomes are being operationalized, in consultation with IOM, and with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). These discussions have resulted in the following key decisions and recommendations:

- Recognized the importance of developing frameworks for skills training and recognition aligned with destination countries;
- Recognized the benefit of establishing a Thematic Working Group to promote fair and ethical recruitment and to engage the recruitment industry for creating industry-led support for ethical recruitment;
- Decided to take into account the specific needs and vulnerabilities of female migrant workers in the design and implementation of labor migration policies;
- Underlined the importance of engaging in the development of national indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertinent to CP objectives, in particular the goals relating to decent work and safe migration;
- Endorsed the implementation plan for the Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programme for Migrant Workers (CIOP) as regional modules for pre-departure orientation;
- Agreed to consider health issues within the relevant thematic priorities of the CP;
- Recognized the universal efforts to reduce remittance transaction costs to less than 3% as stipulated in the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals, and reiterated the desire to support efforts to develop methodology to provide real-time data on transfer costs of remittances in view of reducing remittance transaction costs;
- Agreed to consider enhancing efforts at national level, to empower migrant workers and their families on decision-making on financial management;

- Agreed to produce a labor market research Operational Guide that will facilitate the documentation of labour market trends in destination countries and analyze potential areas of demand;
- Welcomed the setting up of a Colombo Process Technical Support Unit (CP TSU) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to provide support to all the CP countries in pursuing the goals and actions set in the current five thematic priorities of the CP and any other areas that the CP would agree in the future;
- Decided to recommend to the next Ministerial Meeting adoption of the proposed self-funding formula which will ensure predictability and regularity of CP meetings;
- Emphasized the interest of CP states in enhancing cooperation and coordination between the CP, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) and other labour migration mechanisms and Regional Consultative Processes, with a view to enhancing understanding and sharing experiences for mutual benefit;
- Welcomed the ADD Pilot Project on Skill Development, Documentation and Recognition, through supporting the occupational certification adopted, which focuses on selected occupations in the UAE and Kuwait through supporting the occupational certification of Indian, Pakistani and Sri Lankan construction workers and Filipino workers in other sectors going to these countries;
- Recognized ways to enhance further joint activities supported by the ADD and the CP on common thematic areas, including the need to identify national focal points relevant to the thematic areas of the ADD on labour mobility and recruitment, consultation among CP country missions in receiving countries on common concerns. It is also proposed to have a mechanism for information sharing between the CP and ADD such as on legislation and legal practices with respect to ethical labour recruitment and other relevant areas.

Hon. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Harsha De Silva, in concluding comments on 5 November 2015, appreciated “the innovative thinking of the member states’ representatives, who have demonstrated their true commitment to work together to ensure migration with our desired visions”. He added, “We have to push forward to translate the innovative ideas into action and practices”.

The progress in these areas will be presented to the next Ministerial Meeting of the Colombo Process which is scheduled to be held in mid-2016 in Colombo.

Colombo
Sri Lanka

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