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**Committee for Labour Migration: General Discussion on Labour Migration  
Governance and fair recruitment**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, we thank the ILO for the comprehensive report on “*Addressing governance challenges in a changing labour migration landscape*”, which provides a valuable insight to our timely discussion in this Committee and believe that conclusions deriving from our work could effectively guide the future work of the ILO, as well as contribute to the ongoing dialogue on international labour mobility.

Effective governance mechanisms for labour migration is particularly important in the context of recent international efforts, in particular in realising the 2030 Development Agenda, and to contribute to the Global Compact on Migration. Given that well managed, safe, regular and orderly migration could benefit both the destination and originating countries, we would like to share our experience under two broader areas;

a) labour migration governance, at national level,

b) Regional level cooperation through the Colombo Process (CP) and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD)

**a) Labour Migration Governance in the national context;**

As a country with a sizeable number of its citizens working abroad, the Government of Sri Lanka places migration high in its national development policy and considered them primarily as human beings and secondarily as income generators.

We have made considered efforts to improve our national labour migration policies and governance. Under a dedicated Ministry of Foreign Employment, we have;

- Developed a national policy on Decent work (2006) and a National Labour Migration Policy (2008),
- Introduced regulations for fair recruitment,
- Regular engagement by the National Advocacy Council on labour migration consisting all key stakeholders related to labour migration such as private

sector, recruitment agents, trade unions, civil society, international organizations,

- Creating a special Investigation Division to address the issues of exploitation of migrant workers at the recruitment process within the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, established under the Ministry of Foreign Employment. This Division is empowered to take legal action against wrong doers.
- Special focus on “implementing a single contract system”(a service contract originated in the country of employment).
- A comprehensive training system offered at pre-departure orientation level covers all aspects of labour migration and basic language training.

Mr. Chairman,

Labour migration governance has **close relations to other governance structures such as health, education, finance etc.** Recognising the close relations between the labour migration governance and health policies, Sri Lanka has developed a comprehensive ‘**National Migration Health Policy**’, launched in 2013. Under this, a comprehensive and standardized health assessment is carried out prior to departure, and are provided with information on health risks in the destination countries. We have also worked with regional and international partners in promoting migrant health agenda in the respective migration governance spheres. **Inter-Ministry coordination** is also crucial in preventing irregular migration in particular human trafficking and smuggling in persons. We have a Task Force on preventing trafficking in persons, and also work closely through the Bali Process to prevent trafficking in persons.

Effective policies help prevent high costs to migrants and the extensive pre-migration information and pre-departure orientation information plays key role in this regard. The collaboration with the civil society groups are an important stakeholder in helping educate individuals to take informed decisions on migration. Similarly, for those return migrants it is important to have effective reintegration programmes and better access to financial information so that they could integrate early and economically stabilize.

At national level, we have also implemented **special welfare measures for the well-being of migrant workers and their family members** such as educational scholarships for the children, school materials for needy children, vocational training scholarships for school leavers and low interest loan facilities for housing and self-employment through State banks etc.

**At bilateral level:**

Sri Lanka continues to have a close dialogue with receiving states in order to improve the working conditions of our migrant workers, and in this regard, we have entered into MOUs/ Bilateral agreements with several destination countries on manpower recruitment to ensure the welfare and protection of the migrant workers

and customised training programmes are conducted with the assistance of those Governments to improve the competency of our migrants. Bilateral agreements in particular the Government -to -Government engagement ensures the primacy of Governments responsibility in protecting the rights of migrants and in providing decent work.

**b) At regional level;**

As the immediate former Chair of the Colombo Process (CP)- a voluntary regional Consultative process of 12 Asian Contractual Labour Sending Countries and as the Incumbent Chair of a much larger gathering of both labour sending and labour receiving countries in the GCC-Asia migration corridor-the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD), Sri Lanka places greater interest on the Regional Consultative Process, and their potential to bring positive impact on labour migration governance.

As we established the Colombo Process in 2003, the conventional wisdom remained that the Colombo Process countries in most instances being competitors, many of the issues that we have to grapple with were considered as beyond the capacity of leveraging as a Group. However, after nearly 15 years of collective work, we could look back with satisfaction that we sought to tackle some of the most pressing issues faced by labour migrants of CP member countries, to put in place some of the best practices to mitigate and overcome problems faced by labour migrants, developed some of the most vital linkages between the sources of supply and demand that could help, and strengthened both the institutional and financial capacity for the CP to be better prepared for the future.

The Colombo Process began discussing on reduction of remittance cost well before it was discussed and agreed in the Agenda 2030. Under Sri Lanka's Chairmanship of 3 1/2 years, the CP made tangible progress on 5 key thematic areas, namely on Ethical recruitment, Skills development and recognition, Pre-departure orientation, Remittances cost, Market trend analysis. The collective efforts based on open and pragmatic action enhanced the importance of Colombo Process as a regional process for labour sending countries. This experience enabled Sri Lanka to accept the invitation to be the Chair of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD), which is a migration fora of both labour sending and labour receiving countries.

The Colombo Statement adopted during the 4<sup>th</sup> ADD Ministerial meeting held in January 2017 in Sri Lanka, it was agreed to pursue implementation in four concrete areas through workshops and pilot projects; ;

- Ethical Labour recruitment
- skills certification and mutual recognition
- Use of technology to facilitate and improve the outcomes of labour mobility
- Global consultations on the adoption of a Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

In the GCC-Asia corridor the ADD agreed to ensure compliance on ethical recruitment. A new model that can be applied across the corridor will be considered based on the model of Canada-Philippines and on the MUSANED System between

Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia. The ILO voluntary 'principles and guidelines on fair recruitment' has been used as a basis. The model is expected to enhance transparency, and joint oversight by both destination and origin countries. It will also enable to exchange information on the recruiters and employers and the labour contracts will be an essential element. Advance technology will be introduced to enhance the effectiveness and transparency of the recruitment system, where there will be accountability on both sides.

On Skills Certification and recognition, the ADD has already launched a pilot project covering construction industry. Many countries in the GC-Asia corridor has developed National Level Vocational Training Qualifications, and occupational skills standards. A skills passport system is on the pipe line for future consideration. In Sri Lanka, two training centres have been accredited under this project. This policy will enable the workers to improve their qualifications and the possibility to get the qualification recognized when the worker returns.

The ADD has also been actively pursuing the discussions under global consultations towards the adoption of a Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, considering the potential of significantly enhancing the development outcomes of labour mobility by acting to improve its governance", and to improve migrant protection, as well as to develop sound and effective solutions to the challenges faced by labour mobility that can be shared with the rest of the world.

A two-day workshop will be held in Dubai in early July which can derive useful input to the GCM process.

Mr. Chairman,

Challenges do exist at any level of labour migration governance. However, collective efforts within Government agencies as well between countries of origin and countries of destination can contribute to overcome those challenges gradually, as we have seen with the progress of CP and the ADD providing more opportunities for safe and regular migration for employment. What is needed is to ensure existing legal obligations and voluntary guidelines are fully implemented rather than introducing new measures.

Therefore as final take away, we wish to highlight three points;

- i. Labour migration governance requires whole of Government approach
- ii. Such measures should be 'evidence -based', not 'opinion based'
- iii. Regional Consultative Processes have an important role in adopting common standards and practices to harmonise labour migration, and promote regular migration.

Thank you.