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SRI LANKA TO CHAIR 'ABU DHABI DIALOGUE' AMONG ASIAN COUNTRIES OF LABOUR ORIGIN AND DESTINATION

Sri Lanka has been unanimously elected to be the next Chair-in-Office of the 17 member 'Abu Dhabi Dialogue' (ADD) among Asian Countries of Labour Origin and Destination.

Senior Officials representing member governments of the ADD at a meeting on 11-12 May 2016 in Dubai, agreed to Sri Lanka's proposal to host a meeting of Senior officials and the 4th Ministerial consultation in Colombo in January 2017. The Ministers responsible for Foreign Employment of the ADD countries will attend the Colombo Meeting. Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam are members of the ADD.

Kuwait is the current Chair-in-Office of the ADD. The ADD which brings together Asian labour sending and receiving countries, seeks to boost protection and improve conditions of employment for millions of foreign workers in the Gulf, in its 'Kuwait Declaration' of November 2014 noted that "recognizing that individual government's efforts may fall short, we resolve to work together to prevent and sanction exploitative recruitment practices that place workers at great risk and undermine fundamental rights". The recent Senior Officials meeting in Dubai among other matters discussed increasing labour mobility in destination labour markets, where foreign workers can move from one employer to another. It highlighted the benefits of labour market flexibility and internal mobility to workers, employers and in terms of the broader labour market outcomes, notably in terms of increased labour productivity, better job matching and an improved skill mix. It explored model policies and operational tools to facilitate internal mobility and empower governments of destination countries to leverage its benefits.

The upcoming 4th Ministerial Consultation in Colombo will focus on bilateral and multilateral cooperation in confronting challenges that are associated with labour recruitment and consider alternatives to the prevalent recruitment models as a main item of the Consultation's agenda. It will further review ongoing programmes of cooperation in the field of skills development,

certification and recognition and the leveraging of occupational skill recognition in the development of model admission and mobility policies. It will also consider the findings of the IOM-commissioned report on the recruitment industry in the Asia-GCC corridors and alternative models of labour recruitment for Asia-GCC corridors. Additionally the Colombo Ministerial Meeting will discuss a model policy framework that ties skilling in COOs to mutual recognition of original and acquired skills up-skilling in CODs, admission policies, mobility policies and policies on the re-integration of returning workers in their home communities. The review and discussion of a paper on the leveraging of technology to improve the administration of cross-border labour mobility, is also on the agenda.

The Sri Lanka delegation to the meeting led by Secretary Sena Witanage, included Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva Ravinatha Aryasinha and the Additional General Manager of the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau W. M. V. Wansekara. Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates S. J. Mohideen and Minister A.S.K. Senavirathne were also associated with the delegation.

In addition to delegations from the ADD member states, the meeting was attended by an observer delegation from the GCC General Secretariat, the Executive Bureau of the GCC Council of Ministers of Labour, the Government of Switzerland, IOM, ILO, ESCWA, Migrant Forum Asia, academic institutions in Bahrain, the United States and Bahrain and private sector executives.

Sri Lanka is also the current Chair of the Colombo Process (CP), the Regional Consultative Process on the management of overseas employment and contractual labour of Asia which comprises 11 labour sending countries - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, provides a regional platform to engage in dialogue and exchange good practices on issues related to contractual labour migration.

Sri Lanka Mission
Geneva

17 May 2016