



**STATEMENT BY**  
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**(IOM)**  
**Colombo Process 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Consultation**  
**Colombo, 25 August 2016**

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- H.E. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
- Hon. Mangala Samaraweera, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka
- Hon. Thalatha Atukorale, Minister of Foreign Employment, Government of Sri Lanka and the Chair-in-Office of the Colombo Process

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is both an honour and a pleasure to be with you today to take part in this important Colombo Process consultation, the fifth since 2003.

Let me start by thanking the Government of Sri Lanka, as Chair, for hosting this Ministerial Consultation, a timely event that coincides with the 65th anniversary celebration of our Organization, IOM, and with the formal entry of IOM in the United Nations System as a “related Organization”. As Director General of IOM, I will sign the agreement with UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon at the United Nations General Assembly’s Summit on Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants on 19 September.

In my statement, I would like to do three things:

- (1) Recall briefly the context in which the CP operates;
- (2) Review the achievements of the CP under the SL Chairmanship; and
- (3) Reflect on prospects for the future.

## **I. The context in which the CP operates**

Asia is the most populous region in the world with more than four billion inhabitants of our seven billion world. As such, Asia is by far the largest source of international migration. According to best estimates, over 2.5 million Asian workers leave their countries every year under contract to work abroad. A large proportion of workers from South and Southeast Asia head for the Gulf States to perform

various types of service, trade and construction jobs, while others move to North America, Europe and Asian countries.

The impact of migration on the economies of Asian countries of origin is substantial: Asia receives more than half of all remittance flows to countries of origin. In proportion, Asian migrants remit more than migrants from other regions. In fact, there were five Asian countries among the top 10 remittance receiving countries in 2015 (World Bank 2016).

Colombo Process countries are, of course, acutely aware that migrant workers are better able to contribute to the socio-economic development of countries of destination and origin, when their well-being is assured. To achieve this policy objective, policymakers must resolve complex policy equations covering factors as diverse as human rights, demography, labour market supply and demand or community development. But in the end it is the lives of migrant men and women that are at stake.

CP countries are to be congratulated for having been pioneers in the development of policies and practices whose primary purpose is to improve the welfare of migrants and their families, which brings me to my second point.

## **II. The achievements of CP under the SL Chairmanship**

After a decade, the Colombo Process returned to its birthplace in 2013, a very significant moment for the international community because it was during that year that the second High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development was held and work began in earnest on the post-2015 development agenda.

I note with satisfaction that the CP Strategic Vision drawn up under the Sri Lanka Chairmanship has breathed new life into the Colombo Process and enabled the membership to continue building on the achievements of previous chairmanships. The scope and extent of collaboration of the CP Member States, has also been extended, among themselves and with their partners.

The unprecedented number of Senior Officials' Meetings, four in the past three years including the one held yesterday, provides clear evidence that the commitment of the Member States to this important Regional Consultative Process remains strong.

I wish to acknowledge the numerous accomplishments during the Chairmanship of Sri Lanka under the theme "International Labour Migration for Prosperity: Adding Value by Working Together". I would like to single out some of these at three levels, Institutional, Thematic and Intra-regional.

### **A. Institutional Level**

- The establishment of an ambassadorial and expert level group in Geneva to discuss and deliberate on matters of institutional relevance arising from the Senior Officials' Meetings has further

enhanced information sharing and enabled the reaching of a consensus on two key outcomes: 1) CP Membership expansion; and 2) Self-funding mechanism;

- I trust that both the expansion of the CP membership to other like-minded countries in the region; and the setting up of a self-funding mechanism similar to that established already in other RCPs would greatly contribute to consolidating the organizational structure, the sustainability and the predictability of the CP as a whole.

## **B. Thematic Level**

- The ‘Strategic Vision’ that has been agreed to is, in effect, a road map providing guidance for future work under five thematic areas.

For example, The CP is taking the lead in the promotion of ethical recruitment and moving towards an “employer pays” model that will both increase the integrity of recruitment systems and lower the cost of migration for migrant workers.

- Resources were successful mobilized to support the implementation of tailored programs or activities under each thematic area. This, in turn, enabled a working group to be formed for each team and these are already operational. I wish to thank the Government of Switzerland for their financial support.

### **C. Intra-regional Level**

- The holding of the Third Asia-EU Dialogue for the first time in Asia, namely in Colombo in 2014, back-to-back with the Second Senior Official Meeting, is an important statement about the ability of the CP to pursue joint cooperation at the intra-regional level. “Strengthening Labour Migration Corridors between Asia-EU through Enhanced Migration Governance”, was the auspicious theme of that dialogue.
- The CP has also demonstrated its ability to act as a catalytic platform to translate some of its aspirational aims into action. I refer here to the CP’s enhanced engagement with destination countries of the GCC through the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, of which Sri Lanka has recently become the chair. This is reflected in the CP’s support for two programmes: 1) The Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programme for Migrant Workers; and 2) The Pilot Project on Skill Development, Documentation and Recognition.

### **III. The prospects for the future**

IOM and its partners have been supporting the CP since its inception and other Regional Consultative Processes for some 30 years. The number of RCPs has doubled from nine in 2005 to 18 in 2015 -- covering almost every region of the world with some 160 countries participating in one or more RCPs.

Given the political sensitivity of migration, the very fact that governments in Asia and in other regions have committed themselves to consultation on migration is an achievement in itself.

At the last Global RCP Meeting held in Cairo in September 2015, I recalled with satisfaction that the previous Global RCP Meeting held in Lima in 2013 included in its outcome document specific recommendations for consideration by the 2013 High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. This helped paved the way, in turn, for the inclusion of migration in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. You will recall that migration was – rather inexplicably – absent from the Millenium Development Goals.

It is in this context that I am pleased to renew my cordial invitation to Hon. Thalatha Atukorale, Minister of Foreign Employment, in her capacity as the Chair-in-Office of the Colombo Process, to take part in the next Global RCP meeting. It will take place on 13 October 2016, in Geneva, under the broad theme of “Migration and the Sustainable Development Goals: the Role of Inter-state Consultation Mechanisms on Migration and of Regional Economic Organizations.”

Amongst their many achievements, RCPs have increased the international community’s appreciation of migration issues and challenges -- as seen in the context of the CP, by: 1) the recent

generous contribution of the Government of Switzerland through IOM in support of its role as the Secretariat of the Colombo Process, and 2) the support that IOM received by the EU to advance the agenda of the Asia-EU Dialogue.

The exchange of information and the improvement of the understanding of migration have had substantial impact on migration governance worldwide. Many RCPs for instance, have systematized the way in which they gather, store and disseminate information on migration and migration policy. In this regard, the CP is no exception. The CP has established a Technical Support Unit; launched an online depository; and activated a Thematic Area Working Groups, to name a few.

I congratulate all the CP Member states on what they have achieved under the capable leadership of Sri Lanka, and I am particularly proud of the many legacies of the Sri Lankan Chairmanship. These achievements represent solid, viable and bright prospects for sustained dialogues and partnerships. These achievements promote better migration management systems so that Asian workers can migrate under safe, legal, and better conditions -- conditions that allow CP migrants to contribute optimally to the development of their countries and communities. These prospects, however, are tasked with turning migration challenges into opportunities for all. This requires good migration governance; a



broad, durable consensus among a wide constituency; and coherent, coordinated policies among partners.

## **Closing**

In closing let me wish you a successful and fruitful consultation and reconfirm IOM's readiness to continue and strengthen its support to the Colombo Process.