



Colombo Process

Statement
by

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on the occasion of the
handing over of the Chairmanship of the Colombo Process

29th March 2017
IOM HQ, Geneva

**The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations and
other International Organizations in Geneva**

*Address by Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha,
Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the UN in Geneva
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Director-General of IOM, Ambassador William Lacy Swing,

Excellencies and colleagues,

On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka and in my capacity as the Chair-in-Office of the Geneva-Based Colombo Process (CP), I welcome you all to this special meeting where the leadership of the 12 member Colombo Process¹ will be passed on to the Permanent Representative of the Government of Nepal. We do so 7 months after the successful conclusion of the 5th Ministerial Meeting held in Colombo on 25th August 2016, under the CP's Chair-in-Office Mrs. Talatha Athukorala, Minister of Foreign Employment of Sri Lanka.

As I do so, my mind goes back to the 21 October 2013 (just over 3 ½ years ago) when on behalf of my government, I accepted the Chair of the Colombo Process, from Ambassador Hannan, on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh, at a meeting held at the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka, before a small gathering which included the DG/IOM and officials, as well as the relevant staff members of the Bangladeshi and Sri Lanka Missions.

Having hosted the first Ministerial meeting of the group on 1-2 April 2003 and been its founding Chair from 2 April 2003- 22 September 2004, we did so with much nostalgia, but also with some trepidation. In the intervening years the group had been ably led by the Philippines (23 September 2004 - 20 September 2005), Indonesia (21 September 2005-13 December 2009) and Bangladesh (14 December 2009- 12 October 2013), who had taken progressive steps that had been crucial to building this voluntary forum, with steady Secretarial support of the IOM.

However, the conventional wisdom at the time 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. We were also solely dependent on the IOM raised funds to even organize regular Senior Officials meetings. Besides a few stand alone and ad hoc initiatives on ethical recruitment, pre-departure orientation, women migrants, crises response in destination countries and adopting the operating modalities, there appeared to be no overarching institutional architecture that integrated these many positive elements and other vital components in a manner that generated sufficient momentum within CP.

At the same, time we were deeply conscious of the tremendous potential the CP had in helping manage contractual labour migration, with a yearly estimate of 2.5 million of Asian origin overseas worker population, which was growing in numbers and diversity in terms of destination and source countries. Also their contributions to the economic growth and development were not only increasing, but also becoming critical not only for their own countries and being a catalyst for the upward socio-economic mobility in the region and internationally as well.

While having no illusion of the challenges that persisted, we dismissed the notion that this must necessarily be a zero-sum-game. Sri Lanka took the view that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and that a collective voice would be stronger than any individual voice.

¹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam

In scoping out our approach to the CP, we were guided by 4 important principles;

First, it was important **that the tough issues needed to be addressed at the outset.**

Second, in the core areas we choose to focus on, we had go beyond rhetorical statements and **deliver tangible benefits to the migrant workers of Member States.**

Third, in order to benefit from the relative strengths and interest of Member States, it was decided **to entrust the leadership of the different areas of action to those Member States that volunteered to do so.**

Fourth that the Colombo Process States **should generate from within, sufficient funds to ensure regularity and predictability in their meetings.**

In consultation with the membership of the CP, GOSL decided to develop a 'road map' to guide Sri Lanka's chairmanship which sought to strengthen engagement between CP Member States and countries of destination, under the overall theme "*International Labour Migration for Prosperity: Adding Value by Working Together*". We sought the help of the IOM to share with us the experience of other RCPs and also directly reached out to States, International Organizations and INGOs that had experience and resources to share with us.

For purposes of record, let me focus on some of the key areas of activity and outcomes during Sri Lanka's leadership of the Colombo Process:

1. Enhancing the substantive focus of the CP.

In line with the above mentioned overall theme, Sri Lanka's 'road map' towards its Chairmanship has sought to strengthen engagement between CP countries and countries of destination in the GCC primarily focusing on five main Thematic Areas, namely; **Develop Skills and Qualification Recognition Processes, Promote Ethical Labour Recruitment Practices (including Standard Employment Contracts), Effective Pre-departure Orientation & Empowerment with an additional focus on migration and health, Promote Cheaper, Faster & Safer Transfer of Remittances, Enhancing capacities of the Colombo Process participating countries to track labour market trends, to which was later added the setting up of the Colombo Process Technical Support Unit (CPTSU) in support of CP goals.**

Thematic Area Working Groups (TAWG) have been set up and five CP Member States namely, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Philippines, Pakistan and Thailand lead them with the active participation of experts from other States. This mechanism is moving on its own strength while feeding back on the progress to the SOM. A number of expert symposia and training programmes have been held in these five areas, which I do not wish to get into detail, but however, it may be useful to briefly outline some of the progress made in the five thematic areas;

In the area of **qualification and skills recognition** led by Sri Lanka, the CP identified this as a crucial priority in ensuring that our CP nationals do not have to accept jobs that are below their skill levels, thus paving the way for better employment terms and conditions. We have made small but concrete steps in this regard, including;

- Enhanced cooperation between a country of destination (COD) and countries of origin (COO), including the support extended towards pilot initiative of the ADD focusing on skills certification in the construction, catering and electrical sectors in the UAE, Kuwait and CP countries, namely India, Pakistan, Philippines Bangladesh

and Sri Lanka. The CP has agreed to promote the wider replication of these good practices and lessons learned from the initiative to other CP Member States (CPMS).

- Furthermore, a national assessment of labour market trends and skills profiles of a selection of migrant construction workers going to the GCC has been completed; and a detailed mapping of all the different skills assessment and certification standards between countries of origin and destination, which has resulted in important recommendations on how CP workers can be trained for more niche markets in the GCC and gain a competitive edge over workforces from non-CP origin countries.

In the area of **Ethical Recruitment practices** led by Bangladesh, we are pleased to note the significant commitments which have been made by the CPMS thereby signalling the prominence the CP has attached to global priorities on lowering the costs of recruitment of migrants, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The CP's focus in this area has focused on ensuring more protection from unscrupulous employers, less exposure to labour exploitation and trafficking, and the abolition of practices such as extortionate fees and confiscation of passports. There is a global impetus to reduce recruitment costs, and the CP is an important vehicle for this. Some of the key deliverables in this area have been;

First, the CP has encouraged and promoted a culture change in the private sector, by supporting the Alliance of Asian Associations of Overseas Employment Service Providers (OESPAAA) - a network of lead recruitment industry representatives from each CP country, and supported their Fourth Regional Conference in March 2016. The conference gave the recruitment industry an opportunity to discuss and agree on the promotion of ethical recruitment as a common objective through enhanced partnership with the Colombo Process. Under the SDC-funded regional project in support of the CP thematic priorities, IOM facilitated the OESPAAA in convening two sub regional consultations to advance the recruitment industry's actions towards ethical recruitment. OESPAAA representatives were invited to the CP events, including the 3rd SOM and the First Symposium on Ethical Recruitment. Through the sub regional consultations, OESPAAA has agreed to work towards building capacities of OESPAAA members on international standards and instruments on ethical recruitment.

Second, we were also able to hold the first of a series of symposiums for CP Member States and recruitment stakeholders to discuss ways to promote regulatory harmonization in the field of ethical recruitment on 23rd August 2016 in Colombo. A follow-up session is due to take place in May 2017. This series of symposiums will lead to the production of a synthesis report with solid recommendations to promote regulatory harmonization of recruitment intermediaries within the CPMS and with CODs.

Third, two CP Member States, namely India and Nepal, were part of a research project on the labour recruitment industry in the UAE, conducted with the support of SDC through the Colombo Process. This report was commissioned by the UAE and was presented to the recent Abu Dhabi Dialogue Ministerial meeting in January 2017.

And **fourth**, standard terms of employment for domestic workers are currently being developed, again with the support of SDC and UN Women.

On **Pre-departure Orientation (PDO)** led by the Philippines, we are pleased to note that this area already forms an important component of the labour migration policies of many CP states and therefore has a specific focus within the CP as well. Together with our collective effort, we have been able to;

- Develop a Regional Guide for the pre-departure modules and Programme Management system, with the support of IOM. We wish to thank the Philippines for their CIOP initiative (Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programme). Up to seven module guides have been developed under this, ranging from Remedies in Cases of Distress and Crises Situations; right through to Health Management while Working Abroad.
- We note that the CIOP initiative is now taken forward under the leadership of ADD and the Regional Guide on PDO, together with post arrival orientation, will be rolled out through the select pairing of COOs and CODs of the ADD Member States.

In the area of **promoting cheaper, faster & safer transfer of remittances** led by Pakistan, during the 3rd SOM, Member States reiterated their continued support for global efforts to reduce remittance transfer costs to 3% they also agreed to step up national-level efforts to empower migrant workers and their families on remittance management and utilization.

On the last thematic area of **enhancing the capacities of the CP countries to track labour market trends and research** led by Thailand, it is important to note that the capacity of CP Member States to analyse which sectors are in demand could assist us in determining what type of skills training should be prioritised and relates closely to the other thematic areas, not just skills recognition but also pre-departure orientation and ethical recruitment. Keeping this in view,

- A Regional Workshop on Labour Market Research was held on 1 June 2016, which had contributions from experts from China, Malaysia, IOM's Kuwait office as well as other CP states.
- The facilities in the CP website have been improved and expanded in order to become an online repository and a knowledge forum whereby Member States can share vital information on labour market trends. The newly designed website provides an excellent platform for colleagues to share this information through a restricted access portal.
- In addition, discussions are underway within the CP to operationalise the agreement reached at the 3rd SOM, for the production of a Labour Market Research Operational Guide as the next step.

Following an initial round of face to face consultations held by Thematic Area Working Groups (TAWG) last year, a second round of meetings in four areas has already been conducted via the online video conference tool, Bluejeans between December 2016- February 2017, and the meeting minutes have been made available in the restricted interface of the CP Website. The TAWG on Labour market analysis is scheduled to convene on 30 March 2017. The common objectives of the second round meetings were: to discuss and agree on draft Terms of Reference (ToRs) specific to each TAWG; and, to engage in further discussions on good practices from national and regional level initiatives.

Having in the initial phase engaged on the above 5 thematic areas as outlined above, thereby mobilizing corresponding expertise through the Thematic Area Working Groups (TAWG), we felt that the Colombo Process must try to help in mitigating the problems faced by Asian

migrants 'in situ' and also look to the future and keep up with other global initiatives that are relevant and within the objectives of the Colombo Process. Accordingly the 5th Ministerial Meeting held in Colombo in August 2016 mandated the Geneva-based Permanent Missions of the CP to continue consultations and provide recommendations to the Sixth Ministerial Meeting on the following 4 additional areas and I wish to briefly recap our subsequent discussions here in Geneva on these issues and the preliminary work that has already been completed;

- i) On **Consular Support for Migrant Workers**, we noted that there is substantive interest to prioritize work in this area. As a result, the Secretariat on Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative (MICIC) offered CP Member States to consider developing an appropriate 'Collective Preparedness Mechanism' to look into the safety and consular needs, as well as the immediate welfare of the migrant worker populations, in cooperation with the receiving countries. Two specific pilot projects, namely Adoption of an IOM-developed **MICIC E-learning course for consular staff on crises preparedness and response**; and, Adoption of an IOM developed **MICIC smart phone application**, (a government-owned application enabling countries of origin to communicate with their nationals abroad including warning and advisories on crises, to make available assistance in real time, are to be implemented with funding support from MICIC. Afghanistan has started collaborating with the IOM and MICIC team to develop targeted capacity building tools to enable their consular staff posted abroad to better assist nationals abroad in emergencies. In collaboration with IOM and its MICIC team, CP countries have agreed to hold 2 workshops on the issue of Consular Support for Migrant Workers, the first to be held at the National level for CP Embassy representatives posted in Kuwait, in May 2017 and the second to be held at the regional level, with representatives from the CP capitals, in Manila, on 23-24 May.

- ii) On **Migrant Health** we decided to consider the inclusion of Migrant Health as an independent new thematic priority for the CP, which was previously considered under the PDO theme, given the importance of promoting the health of migrant workers throughout the migration cycle to reduce long-term economic and social costs. It was nevertheless noted that the issue of migrant health has been gathering momentum as a priority in several other international fora including in the Human Rights Council which in its 26th and 29th Sessions deliberated on the topic of 'right to healthcare for migrant workers', as it would be imperative to ensure access to health by migrants if we are to realize the SDG 3 to 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages'. Sri Lanka in its national capacity has been actively involved on the topic of migrant health at the World Health Assembly in furthering the 2008 WHA 61.17 Resolution. Specific focus was given to this issue through Sri Lanka's hosting of the 2nd Global Consultation on Migrant Health in Colombo on 23rd February 2017. 05 CP countries² in their national capacity who participated in this Consultation have already subscribed to the 'Colombo Statement on Migrant Health', which was its outcome document. In the context that the CP too has embarked on pursuing 'migrant health', I would like to invite other CP Member States to also to consider subscribing to this Statement.

² Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand

- iii) On **operationalization of the migration-related goals in the SDGs**, a substantive discussion with the IOM experts was held on 25th November 2016, to consider ways the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertinent to CP objectives, in particular the goals relating to decent work and safe migration (especially, SDG targets 8.8. and 10.7), both through national-level actions and the collective efforts of the CP. This was to be done using the CP as a platform to review regional progress made in implementing the abovementioned SDG targets and by sharing experiences and challenges in working with the globally agreed indicators, while noting that the primary role in prioritizing policy decisions and the implementation of the goals and targets lies with the individual Member State.
- iv) On **Promotion of equality for women migrant workers** the objective is to promote the development of specific actions for women migrant workers from CPMS that can address potential discrimination and protect them from the precarious circumstances that many find themselves in, including violence, abuse and exploitation, particularly in the domestic work sector. The UNWOMEN Regional Office in Bangkok has expressed their interest in supporting this initiative which could be positively considered through appropriate channels.

2. Cooperation with other migration related Processes and Partners

Under Sri Lanka's Chairmanship of the CP we also sought to strengthen relationships with other Processes and Partners.

Prominent among these has been the CPs cooperation within the **Abu-Dhabi Dialogue (ADD)**, a forum which brings together both Asia's labour migrant sending CP countries and receiving GCC countries. In this period there have been several important initiatives that we have cooperated on involving clusters of CP and GCC countries - the ADD Skills Development, certification and mutual recognition pilot project involving UAE with India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, the Comprehensive Information Orientation Programme (CIOP) involving Saudi Arabia with Bangladesh and UAE with the Philippines, ethical recruitment research involving UAE with Kerala in India and Nepal.³ We must increase joint activities through replicating existing clusters involved in thematic projects to all members of the CP in the Asia-GCC Corridoes and also consider appropriately on how to respond to any future policy developments in the GCC on labour mobility. Additionally, as the CP countries further operationalize the Colombo Ministerial mandated initiative to seek to collaborate in Consular Support for Migrant Workers in GCC countries and in sharing best practices, our enhanced engagement within the ADD would be of particular significance. Sri Lanka which assumed the Chair of the ADD in January 2017 looks forward to actively contribute to move forward the ADD agenda for the mutual benefit of both the labour sending and receiving countries.

In order to enhance the CP's Cooperation with the **European Union (EU)**, the third Asia-EU Dialogue was held in Colombo following the 2nd SOM from 15-16 October 2014. The two-day meeting focused on discussions on access to EU markets in semi-skilled and 7 skilled categories; labour market assessments in Europe; policy aspects and regulation of labour migration to Europe; enhancing the employability of Asian skilled labour and professionals in the EU market; practical tools to promote labour migration between Asia and EU; and

³ ADD SOM report to 4th Ministerial Meeting January 2017-Colombo.

good practices in Asia-EU Labour Migration. At the 3rd SOM, the CP Members revisited the need to enhance cooperation with the EU, not only through an Asia-EU Dialogue, but through exploring options to expanding the EU market for migrant workers from the CP countries. The EU has also continued to support some of the project activity of the CP. Despite the EU's current migration focus having been extensively aimed at handling the large scale flows into the European region itself, the CP has continued to express its interest to map out areas where concrete steps can be taken between the two groups of countries.

The CP has also worked towards enhancing cooperation with the **Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)**, a government-led process to advance understanding and cooperation on the mutually reinforcing relationship between migration and development and to foster practical and action-oriented outcomes. The Philippines and Sri Lanka have had opportunity to share the experience of CP on the social impact of the ongoing **Global Compact on Migration (GCM)** discussions at the GFMD dialogue held in New York in November last year. The CP must continue to remain engaged on this issue both directly, and as part of the ADD.

Regarding the initiatives on the GCM, particularly in the lead up to holding of the thematic sessions and finalization a Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration by September 2018, CP as an active Regional Consultative Process would be able to further contribute. I have been invited to Chair a Working Session on Irregular Migration and regular pathways, which is the 6th Thematic Cluster Proposed in the GCM, at the forthcoming 2nd Preparatory Meeting of the GFMD 2017, which will be held on 6th April in Geneva. We will take this opportunity to share the progress and best practices of CP in managing labour mobility in our region, as well as on our cooperation with the ADD.

Over the past 3 years Sri Lanka has also been honoured to represent the CP at the IOM's **Global RCP** meeting in Cairo in November 2015 and in Geneva in October 2016. Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Employment Mrs. Talatha Atukorale, as Chair-in-Office of the CP attended the Geneva Meeting last year, where the Colombo Processes was commended for the many tangible actions it had taken to better the lot of migrant workers, and also for being the first RCP which had sought to operationalize the migration-related goals in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

In our capacity as the Chair of the CP, I also had the opportunity to engage with Mr. Francois Crepeau, the then **Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants**, and at his invitation, participated as a keynote speaker at the Expert Consultation on Recruitment Practices and their impact on human rights of migrants, organised by the OHCHR on 31 October 2014, pursuant to the mandate given to the Special Rapporteur vide the Human Rights Council Resolution 26/19.

3. Institutional Reform

While the Colombo Process was re-energized, Sri Lanka also took the view that the institutional and financial mechanisms of the CP must also be strengthened. The CP took advantage of the physical presence of all its Member States here in Geneva, and through a series of meetings by our experts and later at Ambassador level, Colombo Process evolved a **self-funding mechanism** which is now in operation. Following the endorsement at the 5th Ministerial Meeting in Colombo in August 2016, with your concurrence, I signed an MOU with IOM in January this year on the TOR regarding management of the CP Fund. The purpose was to ensure predictability of our regular meetings and rotation of the

Chairmanship, and also to ensure some flexibility to engage in the agreed substantive work. I invite all Member States who are yet to deposit their annual contributions to do it early.

Similarly, the **amended Operating Modalities of the CP** were adopted bringing more clarity on issues such as the Self-financing mechanism, membership, rotation of chairmanship and on participation of observers and civil society in the work of CP.

The collective progress shown by this Group has indeed been an inspiration to our neighbours to join our work. We have also **grown in number** with Cambodia joining during the last Ministerial Meeting held in Colombo as the twelfth member of the CP.

The last Ministerial meeting also **formalized the Geneva engagement** done through Experts and Ambassadors, so that we now have the mandate to conduct the CP work in the intercessional period of SOMs. Over the past 3 ½ years under Sri Lanka's Chairmanship, we have had over 8 PR Meetings and more than 14 Expert Level meetings here in Geneva.

Considering the importance of keeping networked at all levels, the Hon. Minister of Labour Promotion Talatha Atukorale hosted an **informal briefing with the Heads of CP diplomatic Missions based in Colombo** in January 2017, which provided an opportunity to discuss and exchange notes on various activities of the CP.

The August 2016 Ministerial Meeting also **approved the setting up of the Colombo Process Technical Support Unit (TSU) in Colombo-Sri Lanka**, in support of the CP goals, and also to provide support to all the CP Member States 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.

The TSU presently headed by a technical expert recruited by IOM, while servicing all five Thematic Area Working Groups has also **upgraded the CP website <http://www.colomboprocess.org/>**, which in addition to material available to the public, also has a Restricted Interface and since 29 September 2016 registered CP Member States officials has been provided access to this Restricted Interface, which is regularly been updated, especially the TAWG section, while some pages remain work in progress. As of date, 47 CPMS officials (both at the capital and Geneva levels) are registered through receiving login credentials.

The Future

As we turn a new chapter in the Colombo Process today, I wish to thank the Government of Nepal for agreeing to lead us for the next two years. Nepal has shown a keen interest and commitment on contractual labour migration and Ambassador Deepak Dhital's role in our PR level meetings has been particularly constructive. We are happy to hand over to him a well-functioning process, which I am sure will grow from strength to strength over the coming years. Please be assured that as the outgoing Chair, the Government of Sri Lanka, as well as the Sri Lanka Mission in Geneva, will continue to extend its unwavering support to the Government of Nepal and to the Nepal Mission team in Geneva towards your endeavours.

Before I hand over, let me pay tribute to a few individuals and organizations that deserve our appreciation for their understanding and cooperation on the common cause that we have embarked upon in the CP;

- To Minister of Foreign Employment Mrs Talatha Atukorale, whom all of you have come to know through the past few years, I am grateful for her support and commitment shown in guiding the challenging agenda that has been before us. My colleagues and I also appreciate the considerable trust and confidence the Minister and Secretary Mr. G.S Withanage have continued to place in the Geneva Mission for operationalizing the CP agenda on a day to day basis, availing of the presence of the Geneva based Migration related expertise of CP Member States and the IOM. That Minister Athukorale is presently the Chair of the larger migration platform of Asia – the ADD, will no doubt be a matter of reassurance to Member States of the CP that Sri Lanka will continue to work for the welfare of the Asian migrant workforce with even greater vigour.
- To all CP Member States, my fellow Ambassadors, as well as those colleagues who have participated at the Expert level, let me say that all we have achieved over the past 3 ½ years would not have been possible, if not for the very committed constructive engagement shown by all delegations during our meetings, and your ability to get the attention of your capitals and linking between Colombo, Geneva and your respective capitals. Complementing the 4 SOMs and the Ministerial Meeting held in Colombo and the several Thematic Areas Working Group (TAWG) sessions in Bangkok and in Colombo, as also earlier noted that we have done all the strategizing needed through only 8 meeting at the level of Permanent Representatives and 14 expert level meetings, is a tribute not only to the commitment we have all brought to this task, but if I may say so, also to the efficiency with which it has been done.
- Ambassador Swing, true to your mandate as the Head of the leading International Agency for Migration which is now part of the UN System, over these years you have not only inspired us to do what we did, but also been ready to roll up your sleeves and help do the hard pulling whenever the going got tough – and there were multiple occasions. To Ambassador Laura Thompson and the Heads of Departments of the IOM, in particular to the International Partnership Division (IPD) and Labour Mobility and Human Development Division (LHD), I am most grateful for the support you provided and the priority you placed on our work, as did IOM Head of Mission in Colombo Mr. Giuseppe Crocetti, Mr. Shantha Kulasekera and all the staff, who supported the CP related work and the many related meetings held in Sri Lanka.
- A special word of thanks to all experts from across the various departments of the IOM – particularly Tauhid Pasha, Maureen Achieng, Meera Sethi, Nicoletta Giordano, Akio Nakayama, Marina Manke, Mailan Thai and Rachel Velasco, as well as Masako Ueda -the Head of the CP-TSU in Colombo, and Mohamed El Zarkani, Head of IOM in Kuwait, for their collective spirit in helping me and the Sri Lanka Mission in executing the mandate given to us by the CP Ministers and the SOMs. They have earned our highest professional respect and personal affection for going way beyond their call of duty.
- We also wish to take this opportunity to thank the experts in ILO, WHO and UNWOMEN, who on various occasions have contributed to strengthen the work of CP thematic areas by their valuable inputs, research work and expert opinions.

- To Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), I would request Ms. Patricia Pfister, the representative of SDC to convey our deep appreciation to the Swiss Government for your support, in particular for your generous financial assistance which has considerably helped in sustaining the momentum of our activity. The roles played by Mr. Shabrinath Nayar the Regional Director in Dhaka, and Mr. Stefan Bieglar the former SDC focal point are particularly appreciated.
- We also acknowledge the support provided to us by the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) and its Head of Secretariat Mr. Alex Zalami and staff in furthering the CP agenda.
- As for my Colleagues in the Mission, I am thankful to former DPR Manisha Gunasekera for helping in re-energizing the CP activity at the initiation of Sri Lanka's Chairmanship, and to current DPR Samantha Jayasuriya, who over the past 2 ½ years has led the CP Experts Group in Geneva during which time we have seen much of the expansion and operationalization of the CP's ambitious agenda and administrative and financial reform. They together with one other officer from the Mission supporting migration at any given time have proved that you don't need large armies to do good, provided there was sufficient empathy and commitment.

Distinguish Colleagues,

In conclusion, while we must be under no illusion that the problems faced by labour migrants of our region are appreciably less, Sri Lanka can look back with satisfaction to this period of stewardship of the Colombo Process - confident that we sought to tackle some of the most pressing issues faced by labour migrants of CP member countries, put in place some of the best practices to mitigate and overcome their problems, 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.

It is my sincere hope that as the Colombo Process moves on in the coming years under the leadership of Nepal, that we will be able to collectively continue to make an even more meaningful difference to the lives and welfare of over 45 million of our migrant workforce from Asia, and the additional several millions of their families, who have been a considerable life-line to our national economies and development efforts. At a time migration is centre stage globally, let us also hope that our collective efforts will contribute to the process of norm setting and institution building in this field, which will ensure safe, orderly and regular migration for all.

I thank you.