



Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, Geneva

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"Sri Lanka-IOM bilateral cooperation has grown exponentially over the last few years" -Director-General of IOM

Director-General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Ambassador William Lacy Swing, addressing the 108th Session of the IOM Council in Geneva, on Wednesday (29 November 2017) commended the Government of Sri Lanka for its leadership in migration issues and observed "our bilateral cooperation has grown exponentially over the last few years, but particularly in this year". Referring to Sri Lanka's role in regional consultative processes - as until recently Chair of the Colombo Process (CP) and presently as Chair of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD), he thanked Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha for his leadership in steering a number of activities that has strengthened the relationship between the Mission in Geneva and the IOM.

Noting IOM's engagement and support for Sri Lanka in several important areas such as border management, preventing trafficking in persons, human rights, re-integration of refugee returnees, peace building and reconciliation and disaster management, Ambassador Swing expressed hope that IOM and Sri Lanka will continue to build on these excellent relationships. He also congratulated Sri Lanka on launching a comprehensive National Economic Development Programme; the Vision 2025 - A Country Enriched, under the leadership of President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe. He further expressed IOM's appreciation for Sri Lanka's co-sponsorship and for its contribution towards hosting the 'Second Global Consultation on Migrant Health' in Colombo in February 2017, and in actively supporting the efforts at securing the global attention on migrant health.

The Director-General of IOM made these comments in response to the statement made by Ambassador Aryasinha earlier in the day joining the General Debate of the IOM Council, where he had underlined that Sri Lanka was deeply committed to ensuring that tangible benefits accrue to labour migrants from Sri Lanka and the region. Detailing the work initiated by Sri Lanka as Chair of the CP through five Thematic Area Working Groups (TAWG) on Skills Recognition and Development, Ethical Recruitment, Pre-Departure Orientation, Remittances and Labour Market Research, the Ambassador stressed the need to pursue the migration agenda based on ground realities and not driven by perceptions. He said through the ADD, Sri Lanka was presently focusing on seeking to expand consular cooperation involving both the labour sending and receiving countries, in order to improve the handling of cases of abuse and in better serving our nationals in distress.

On the UN Intergovernmental Process on a Global Compact on Migration (GCM) where a Stocktaking meeting will commence next week in Mexico, Ambassador Aryasinha recalling the fruitful discussions in October this year in Geneva at the IOM hosted Global RCP Meeting, as well as at a Panel on the 6th Thematic Cluster of the GCM moderated by Sri Lanka, and the best practices detailed, emphasized that "we do not need to reinvent the wheel". He said "instead we must look into the challenges in the implementation and identify gaps and better synchronize the 'follow-up and reporting process of the GCM outcome', with the ongoing work at regional and national levels by the RCPs. We should also look into complimenting the means of implementation, in particular in the areas of gathering data and analyzing them to improve governance in migration".

Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva Mrs. Samantha Jayasuriya, and Mr. W.M.V. Wansekara, Additional General Manager (International Affairs), Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau were associated with the Ambassador at the session.

Geneva.

30th November 2017