



**Statement by Hon. Gamini Lokuge, Minister of Labour and Labour Relations of the
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**

Plenary of the 103rd Session of the International Labour Conference – 04 June 2014

Mr. President, Vice presidents Distinguish Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. President, Global labour migration will be one of the most important determinants of migration in the coming years and in turn will be greatly influenced by migration. Therefore, at the outset, I wish to extend our congratulations and appreciation to the Director General for his impressive and thoughtful report in which he has suggested 8 initiatives to be implemented for fair migration. In achieving objectives of fair migration, Sri Lanka recognizes the importance of tripartism, coherence, and standards.

I also would like to appreciate the ILO for having undertaken general survey and submission of its report to the ILC on Minimum wage fixing mechanism. The report includes valuable information.

In Sri Lanka we have minimum wage fixing mechanism for private sector workers what we call Wages Boards. In order to simplify the process of wage fixing mechanism and to introduce common wage policy for the entire workforce, the Government of Sri Lanka recently established the national pay Commission. I hope the information of this report would be useful for the pay Commission in its preliminary work.

Employment is crucial for socio-economic development. Specially, since we are in the post crisis period, issues relating to employment and its situation need to be addressed and evaluated. Hence, I do appreciate the Governing Body of the ILO for having selected recurrent discussion on Employment as the follow up to the ILO declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. This declaration called for member states of the ILO to pursue policies based on the strategic objectives namely, Employment, Social protection, social dialogue and fundamental principles and rights at work.

Accordingly, Sri Lanka prepared a comprehensive National Human Resource and Employment Policy and its Work plan after having had extensive discussions with all relevant stakeholders including trade unions and employer representatives with the blessing of the President of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa.

In this regard, I personally as the Minister of Labour and the Government of Sri Lanka appreciate the extensive support and fullest cooperation extended by the ILO through its technical cooperation.

This year at the ILC we do have a discussion on facilitating transitions from informal to formal economy as a standard setting item as well. Most of the developing countries have large informal economies. In Sri Lanka it is about more than 60%. The workers in the informal economy suffer without decent work. Therefore, measures need to be taken in order to protect their rights of employment.

I believe that standard setting along is not sufficient to formalize the informal economy because; it deals with economic structure and level of economic development. Therefore, it is necessary to create an enabling environment for them to come out from the informal to formal. Providing financial assistance, infrastructure facilities, information on available market places, upgrading business knowledge and skills and supporting to establish cooperatives to gain benefits of the economies of scale are very important in this regard.

Mr. President, Sri Lanka hosted a world Youth Conference, last month in Colombo and Youth employment was one of the main areas discussed. In future, number of activities is to be carried out as a result of the conference. As ILO extended its support to the youth conference, I request ILO to continue such support to implement the initiatives with regard to youth employment in Sri Lanka.

Last but not least, I would like to appreciate the reform process initiated by the Director General and hope that it will bring benefits to the constituents of the ILO.

I thank you