Statement by H.E. Ravinatha Aryasinha, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to UN
108th Council of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)
28th November-1st December 2018
Geneva

Madam Chairperson,

At the outset I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as the Chairperson of the 108th Council of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Also, we welcome Cuba and Cook Islands as the new Members of the IOM.

It has been a year since the IOM began to work as a 'Related Organization' of the UN Family, and we acknowledge the strength it has added to the UN's engagement in the field of migration and human mobility. In this regard we note the report of the Director General to this Council on the work of the IOM and its achievements.

Over the past one year, the world witnessed an increasing trend of complexities associated with migration in terms of the root causes, the nature of migration flaws, the capacities of States to make timely responses etc. At the same time, on the optimistic side, migration has become a priority in the Agenda of many international fora. Although the socio-economic development benefits of migration to the societies in origin, transit and destination is a well established fact, the rights, wellbeing and protection of the migrants are not yet being fully appreciated and respected. The negative narrative of migrants continue to hinder their full social inclusion despite the considerable work that has been conducted at community, national, regional and global levels to improve the legislative, governance and policy responses.

It is in this context, the inclusive consultative process leading to the Global Compact on Migration (GCM), which has been ongoing for one year now, since the adoption of the historic New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants on 19 September 2016 in the UNGA in New York, becomes crucial. I thank IOM for the briefing on the developments in the Global Compact Process, given to this Council by the President of the UNGA, and the SRSG for International Migration. My country has been closely following and actively engaging during the Consultative Phase of the GCM, both in its national capacity as well as the current Chair of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) -a Regional Consultative Process of both labour

sending and receiving countries. Sri Lanka appreciates the opportunity given by the President of the UNGA and the two Co-Facilitators of the GCM, Mexico and Switzerland for Sri Lanka to moderate one of the three Panels in the 6th Thematic Cluster on "*Irregular migration and regular pathways, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures*". Sri Lanka also appreciates the support of IOM in conducting a national stakeholder consultation to enable us to identify our national priorities and make recommendations to the UN Secretary-General's Report and to the Stocktaking meeting commencing next week in Mexico.

Sri Lanka is deeply committed to ensuring that tangible benefits accrue to labour migrants from Sri Lanka and the region. The Colombo Process, as a Regional Consultative Process consisting 13 Asian Labour Sending Countries met in Kathmandu this year under the Chairmanship of Nepal and we made a joint submission for the GCM, which is based on our collective practical experience in managing a yearly migration flow of over 2.5 million people. Similarly, expanding this engagement, the ADD also, following a two-day workshop held in Dubai in May this year, submitted concrete, evidence-based inputs to the GCM Process, in particular on strengthening Skills development and mutual recognition, Ethical recruitment, Comprehensive Information Orientation Programme (CIOP) as part of Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO), and using Advance technologies to improve transparency, effectiveness and in preventing abuses in the migration process. Therefore, all what we have presented in the RCP context were based on ground realties, and how we could collectively, as labour sending and receiving countries could do to respond to the challenges we encounter.

I recall the candid interaction we had in October this year in the IOM hosted Global RCP meeting, which enlightened us on the wealth of experience and good practices that each of the Regional Processes has developed over the years, which are evidence based rather than perception driven. Hence, as I noted in my Summary report to the 6th Thematic Session of the GCM, given the best practices detailed, we do not need to "reinvent the wheel". Instead we must look into any 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.

Madam Chairperson,

Regarding our expectations on the outcome of the Global Compact, we support a focused, forward-looking and action oriented outcome document with all the four elements presented by the two Co-Chairs, namely;

- A political declaration reiterating commitment to migrants and refugees that holds the letter and spirit of the New York Declaration.
- Actionable and practical commitments that are mutually reinforcing the already undertaken commitments such as the SDGs related to migration, in particular Goal 10.7.
- Predictable and substantive means of implementation complimenting domestic resources and south-south cooperation.
- A regular mechanism to follow-up progress of implementation in particular by better using already established mechanisms including the RCPs.

Improving the capacities at national level, and sub national levels to undertake the actionable commitments and matching them with national priorities will be the key to the success of the GCM, in particular to enable all countries to judiciously and humanely exercise their sovereign rights on managing their borders. In exercising the right to return of all nationals to their countries of origin, better coordination and transparency in readmission processes is vital to prevent remigration under risky situations and to ensure humane and dignified return and reintegration.

As stated before, the actionable commitments that will be agreed by the GCM must be in sync with the migration related targets and indicators of the SDGs. We also expect that the Compact would propose clear and tangible action on inclusion of migrants in host countries, in particular regarding their access to basic services such as health, justice and education. In this regard we hope that the 'Colombo Statement on Migrant Health', agreed at the IOM and WHO co-hosted second Global Consultation on Migrant Heath in Colombo Sri Lanka from 21-23 February 2017, provides useful inputs. In Sri Lanka a special migrant health unit has been set up with the support of IOM to address the concerns related to migrant health and this is in addition to the access to free public health care for all in Sri Lanka.

In regards to means of implementation, it is important to help countries to improve capacity in assessing progress and reporting them in a timely manner, without overburdening their institutional and resource capabilities. Many of the

developing countries may require to narrow down the policy gaps and improve migration governance. In this context, the Regional Processes can help build confidence among stakeholders and create a platform to share experiences. The ongoing work of the Colombo Process under its five Thematic Area Working Groups (TAWG), has already connected experts in the areas of Skills development, Ethical Recruitment, Remittances, PDO, and Labour Market Research to develop useful tools such as regional guidelines, pilot projects with the collaboration of ADD. These are some positive experience that has worked and could be replicated elsewhere.

We also think capacity building in consular support is another key area which can enhance the knowledge of Consular and Labour Attaches in handling cases of abuse and in better serving our nationals in distress. As the Labour Sending Countries, the Colombo Process joined the IOM /MICIC Secretariat organized meeting in Kuwait in May 2017, on 'Coordination for Improved Assistance to Nationals Abroad in Emergencies', which also provided an opportunity to network among Consular posts to share experiences. We believe a broader alliance of Consular Net Work, as was also suggested in Peter Sutherlands Report (A/71/728), and Migration Assistant Centers along major transit routes must be considered in the GCM Process as pragmatic recommendations. Sri Lanka is keen to expand the consular cooperation involving both the labour sending and receiving countries through ADD.

While we endorse a state-led process for the GCM global follow up using an existing mechanism, we must consider getting the best out of all the expertise in the Geneva-based institutions. Unfortunately, it has been our experience that most of these institutions work in silos and if there is better coordination to bring all their expertise and commitments together, the results could be much more visible and resource effective. Hence, we wish to see that the implantation phase of the GCM bringing key migration service providing UN and multilateral organizations in Geneva together, taking advantage of Geneva being the center for development and humanitarian action.

Madam Chairperson,

Although much of the attention is being paid to large scale movements across national borders, internal migration remains another crucial aspect of the 'people on the move'. Governments need to ensure the speedy resettlement of families, and to help them find durable solutions. In Sri Lanka we have made considerable progress in IDP resettlements, which occurred as a result of the three-decade long internal armed conflict. In line with the efforts of the Government on reconciliation

and peace-building, on 16 August 2016, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the "National Policy on Durable Solutions for Conflict-Affected Displacement" drafted through a wide consultative process. The national policy, while identifying the major obstacles to durable solutions, also provides for institutional mechanisms including at national, provincial and local government levels to coordinate and respond to them, as well as a mechanism for monitoring implementation.

While we look into new and innovative ways of tackling the challenges of human mobility, in particular those related to irregular migration, we require closer cooperation to combat trafficking in and human smuggling, as well as to provide technical assistance to improve capacities in the areas of intelligence gathering, investigation and prosecutorial skills, risk analysis, and in the victim support measures including the medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid, return and reintegration support etc. In Sri Lanka a multi-stakeholder national level Anti Human Trafficking Task Force led by the Ministry of Justice is implementing a strategic national action plan (2015-2019) based on the four-Ps, Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Investigation and Partnerships. An Anti-Trafficking Unit has been set up in the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau to ensure awareness and build capacity of partners. As a Party to the Protocol on Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol), the Government is committed to further improve the situation.

Migration being a reality and an enabler for socio-economic development for individuals, we must make realistic assessments on labour market demands, demographic trends etc, and map out strategies for maximizing benefits from regular pathways of migration for all skills levels. By strengthening bilateral and regional agreements on fair and ethical labour recruitments, we could share the responsibility among labor sending and receiving countries making migration a triple win for migrants, sending and receiving countries. The Private sector and the Diaspora should also be encouraged to be partners in this endeavor.

Similarly Madam Chairperson, the welfare of the families left-behind by migrants and the ability for them to be connected regularly is an important factor, as it affects the overall productivity, efficiency and the moral conduct of the migrants while abroad. Sri Lanka has deployed over 1000 graduate development officers within the entire country on a 'migrant protection programme called "Shramika Surekuma", to make needs assessments, collect data and guide for necessary counseling of the migrant family members. A Migrant Pension Scheme is being considered by the Government. Also educational scholarships for the children, school materials for needy children, vocational training scholarships for school leavers and low interest loan facilities for housing and self- employment through

State banks etc have been provided for migrant families. A worker's welfare fund (WWF) has been formed to meet the expenses regarding repatriation of migrant workers in distress and payment of compensation to migrants and their families in case of sickness, accidents and deaths.

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, we appreciate the close bilateral relations between IOM and Sri Lanka, both at Geneva Headquarters level and in particular through the IOM country office and we note the proposed 2018 budget support to projects on 'strengthening border management', 'Promoting Ethical Conduct and Professionalizing the Recruitment Industry', and to 'strengthen capacities to undertake reforms and to advance peacebuilding and Transitional Justice Processes in Sri Lanka'[1].

Thank you.

[1] Pg 153-14 IOM Programme Budget for 2018