



Statement by Sri Lanka

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration

Informal Thematic Consultation on “International Cooperation and Governance of Migration in all its Dimensions”

Panel 3: International Cooperation and Governance of Migration on Return, Readmission, Integration and Reintegration

20 June 2017-Geneva

Mr. Moderator,

Distinguish panelists, ladies and gentlemen,

My delegation appreciates the comments made by the distinguish panelists and for the useful issue brief shared by the Office of the Special Representative of the UN secretary General on International Migration.

In the migration cycle, return and readmission to the country of origin is usually charged with emotions and more often marred by stories of failure to achieve the objectives of migration. Individuals therefore tend to go through despair, uncertainty and anxiety regarding their future. Even on situations of voluntary return depending on how best the return migrants would socially-economically be integrated to their societies, how well they are empowered to reap development benefits will determine their decision on remigration. Hence, this discussion today in our view touches some of the most sensitive aspects of the migration cycle.

It is a common experience for many developing countries that they have had episodes in their history that their citizens, mostly professionals emigrating which could be called ‘brain drain’. Would it be possible to promote **international cooperation and partnership for ‘brain gain’, as an outcome of the GCM**, where there is international cooperation for origin countries to introduce policies and programmes to attract their professionals to voluntarily return on short term and to contribute to their countries of origin in a more organized and dignified manner.

Regarding migrants who leave the country for **contractual labour**, we would like to share our experience on developing the national level and sub regional level return and reintegration polices to empower labour migrants to have dignified return “with opportunities for skill transfer, productive employment, and conflict free social integration”. We believe that reintegration plans must;

- Start at the stage of pre-departure and efforts must continue throughout the migration cycle, thus it should not be an ad hoc process.
- recognize the rights of migrant workers, and consider them as partners in development
- open up employment opportunities that matches with their acquired skills
- include psycho-social support for those who have faced exploitation and abuse
- Involve and educate stakeholders at all levels of the Government to better implement, monitor the national policy effectively.

As a state party to the Convention on the rights of migrants and the welfare of their families Sri Lanka, through a dedicated programme called “**sharmika Surekum**” launched at National level provides number of services to address the needs of migrants and as of date we have started developing over 1000 individual migration profiles to better understand and serve the families. The families are able to keep track of the migrants and it facilitates their reintegration. Our challenge is addressing issues related to the considerable number of labour migrants who use social networks for migration and hence has become undocumented. It would require cross border cooperation at bilateral and regional levels to regularize such migration.

Bilateral readmission agreements are a commonly used tool in facilitating return and repatriating undocumented migrants and given the complex political and legal nature of the decisions to repatriate such migrant, it must include substantial provisions to cover aspects of comprehensive pre-departure information, reintegration assistance, legality of any future reentry, as well as a health evaluation, so that the migrants could get reintegrated in their country of origin with less conflict. The IOM has successfully supported such Assisted Voluntary Return and Repatriation (AVRR) programmes in Sri Lanka.

Our experience by collaborating at **regional level through the Colombo Process and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue** shows that partnership in enhancing opportunities for legal pathways for migration for all skills levels on one hand has the potential to reduce irregular and unsafe migration, on the other, it enables migrants to be part of the development of the country. The **skills development and certification** projects in the ADD has promoted sending countries to harmonize their training and capacity building processes while encouraging the destination countries to identify their skill gaps and labour market needs. Upskilling ensures more qualified worker returning home. This approach has enhanced mobility for labour migrants in their country of destination as well.

Also, by focusing on **ethical labour recruitment practices and models**, we have been able to increase the accountability and transparency in recruitments, enabling the workers to have matching pay and conditions of work, while the employer receives the required quality of human resource. The migrants will not fall into the trap of having to pay excessive costs. The ADD has initiated joint recognition of skills in selected sectors and that has benefited both sending and receiving countries.

When promoting governance to better manage the migration cycle, in particular return and reintegration we need to promote options for;

- regular pathways for human mobility augmented by matching skills with labour market requirements
- making cost of migration minimum if not zero for the migrant
- Making return and reintegration humane and dignified through measures such as Assisted, Voluntary Return and Repatriation programmes.

I thank you.