



**Statement to be delivered by H.E. Mohan Pieris, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Sri Lanka to the United Nations
at the General Debate of the International Migration Review Forum**

Let me congratulate you on your successful stewardship towards holding the very first session of the International Migration Review Forum. We are confident that this initiative would be a catalyst in mobilizing both state and non-state stakeholders to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, at a time when the world is facing new challenges in an area of human activity inextricably interwoven with the indefatigable spirit of mankind for survival.

Even though the resolution 73/326 of the General Assembly regarding the structuring of the IMRF was adopted prior to the pandemic, we believe that adopting the resolution could not have been more timely. The Progress Declaration to be adopted at this Forum, we believe, would define the trajectory in which the migration agenda would unfold.

Mr. President,

Reaffirming our commitment to implement the guiding principles outlined in the Global Compact for Migration in line with its 360-degree vision, Sri Lanka believes that the guiding principles and the comprehensive approach outlined therein would provide pathways for better realization of the vision envisaged under the 2030 Agenda. We remain committed to deliver inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, respecting and protecting the individual rights, freedom and dignity of migrants as recognized by the GCM.

However, Sri Lanka is of the view that the positive roles played by migrants for inclusive growth and development in countries of origin, transit and destination should receive greater recognition. We observe that as many as 281 million people were international migrants in 2020 globally, of whom 48 % were women and girls and 15% were under the age of 20.

In this context, an increased number of migrants, especially women and children, are facing greater hardship every year. In addressing these issues faced by the people in such vulnerable situations, condemning all forms of racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance modern day slavery faced by migrants should be given very high priority by this forum. There cannot be a compromise on the dignity of the human kind. It is not a commercial commodity that can be traded on the altar of economic expediency or for reasons of good international relations. It was the Holy father Pope Francis who recently in his message in the world day of migrants proclaimed that he reaffirms our shared response by articulating four verbs in our treatment of migrants namely ‘ to welcome’, to protect’, to promote, and to integrate’. Welcome migrants he says by offering broader options for migrants to seek admission to destination countries safely and legally. Protect migrants by procedures intended to defend their rights and dignity, independent of their legal status. Offer them freedom of work, opportunities of work, access to communication out of respect for their humanity. Promote essential means to enable them their potential as human beings in all dimensions as members of the human family.

Facilitate their integration by providing opportunities for intercultural enrichment which they bring with them without an assimilation that leads migrants to forget their cultural identity.

Due to the increase of the opportunities in the labour receiving countries in the post pandemic times, Sri Lanka witnessed a growth of 126.8 % of the departures for foreign employment in the last year. The male and female departures for the year for foreign employment stood at 66.2% and 33.8 % respectively. With the view to eliminating the possible risks and vulnerabilities involved with regard to these migrants, Sri Lanka adhered to a number of measures which included creating awareness among the migrants of the benefits of using regular channels, screening the departing migrant workers at the airports to detect those who are using irregular channels and sensitizing them with the risks associated. In addition, Sri Lanka has taken several statutory and law enforcement methods to act against both licensed and unlicensed agencies engaged in irregular migration to discourage such occurrences.

Sri Lanka established a National GCM Implementation Committee in December 2021 co- convened by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the State Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Market Diversification (SMFEPMD) with the view to developing a national GCM implementation plan, its implementation and monitoring. Further, reporting sub- committees were created in line with the 'whole-of-government 'and 'whole-of-society approach'.

The Committee has identified the GCM objectives 1, 3, 6, 10, 11, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21 as priority objectives for Sri Lanka. The draft of the detailed Implementation Plan has identified key activities to strengthen the migration policy process in the country.

Sri Lanka strongly believes that the achievement of both GCM objectives and the SDGs is realized through the formulation of sound migration policies. In this context, we are of the view that when developing a national GCM implementation plan for Sri Lanka, the identified GCM objectives/priorities need to complement national SDG targets. Towards this task, we are ready to learn from GCM Champion countries and to share our experience with the other member states to develop best policies and practices, as we do through the Colombo Process and the Abu Dhabi dialogue.

Mr. President,

Accelerating the progress made by the Global Compact on Migration will be of immense mutual benefit to all. It is our understanding that Objective 4 of the GCM, makes it incumbent on the sending state to ensure that all migrants have a legal identity and adequate documentation . This includes creating an enabling environment for migrant workers to obtain a legal document such as a passport and to extend consular support to them in obtaining legal identity. Facilitating the legal identity is also helpful for migrant workers to remit their earnings through the regular channels of remittances, without adhering to illegal mechanisms of money transfer.

It is apposite that member states build capacity and skills in migrant groups to enable them to engage actively in the countries of destination and integrate proactively in the life of the host community.

Let me conclude by reminding ourselves of a very apt quote by the American poet, writer and human rights activist Bryant McGil which I believe we can take away as one that will nourish our own ethos in the context of migrants and migration:

“When you give others a new chance, a new chance is really being given to you”. And that’s to each one of us. Think about it?

I thank you.