

**Statement delivered by H.E. Deepak Dhital, PR/Ambassador, Permanent
Mission of Nepal at Geneva
on the occasion of Handover Ceremony of the Colombo Process
29th March 2017**

**Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha
Ambassador William Lacy Swing, Director General of IOM
PR/Ambassadors from the Colombo Process Member Countries
Dear Colleagues,
Representatives of the IOM and SDC,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I feel it a privilege and honour to attend this meeting. First of all, on behalf of the Government of Nepal, I extend sincere thanks to all Member Countries for entrusting Nepal with the responsibility of chairmanship of the Colombo Process for the coming term. I take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Sri Lanka, the outgoing chair, for having provided outstanding leadership and guidance to the Colombo Process over the last three years. I also want to recall with appreciation the contributions made by former chairs – the Philippines, Indonesia and Bangladesh in advancing the cause of the CP during their tenures. The CP has streamlined its agenda, clarified its objective in line with emerging realities and taken an institutionalized shape over the years due to strong collaboration and cooperation among all member countries, all based on mutual trust and understanding. As a voluntary, non-binding consultative process, it thrives on our collective will and action. I believe that all of us have strong determination to take this momentum forward.

I personally thank Ambassador Ravi for his kind remarks and the highlighting of the achievements of the CP during Sri Lanka's chairmanship in a comprehensive manner. I pay tribute to you, ambassador, including your team of experts, for the excellent manner in which you provided leadership to the Process as Chair-in-office in Geneva. It is highly appreciable that several important dimensions have been added to the Colombo Process during your tenure. I know that I would have to work hard to catch up with the momentum the CP has already taken under your leadership. With your new responsibility as chair-in-office of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, we would have the distinguished pleasure of forging complementarities between the two regional consultative processes in all our good efforts in the days ahead.

I thank Director General, Ambassador William Lacy Swing and his entire able team at IOM for continued commitment to support the Colombo Process. The kind words

expressed by the Director General about Nepal and myself in his remarks are encouraging. I personally believe that without your kind financial, technical and secretarial support, the Colombo Process would not have achieved the extra mileage it has taken so far.

Equally remarkable is the support provided by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to help the Process remain focused on thematic areas of concerns and oriented to actions and results. I take this opportunity to thank SDC as well.

Excellencies/ Dear Colleagues,

Nepal has a substantial number of her youths working in contractual employment in a number of labour destination countries, the remittances from foreign employment contributing around 30 per cent to the GDP of the nation. We therefore attach importance to fair, regular and managed migration. We have conviction that regional consultative process based on shared interests and concerns brings us closer to the common understanding of all existing problems in the labour migration sector, and helps find ways and means of resolving them for common benefit.

Overseas employment and subsequent remittances transfer has remained crucial component in the socio-economic development process of the CP member countries. An estimated 45 million migrants from the Asia region are believed working in various destination countries. All of us are getting our share of benefits from this phenomenon. Some of our member countries are among the largest realizers of global remittances flows from foreign employment. Given the slowdown in the economy and slow economic recovery in many of the destination countries, and many inherent problems associated with labour migration, it is crucial that we pay closer attention to protect the fundamental rights of our migrant workers, promote their lawful interests and provide welfare to them so that there is less impact on our sustainable development efforts.

Excellencies/Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fifth Ministerial Consultation of the Colombo Process member countries held in Colombo last August has given us important strategic guidelines and mandate to carry the process of our regional forum forward. One notable achievement of the fifth Ministerial meeting is that it has approved the modalities of a small self-funding mechanism that will enhance the feeling of ownership and commitment among the member countries. Similarly, the amended version of the operating modalities of the CP has further clarified the timing and framework of the consultative meetings, utilization of the funds under the self-funding mechanisms and from other potential sources, the role and functions of the existing thematic areas working groups and the involvement of observers and other stakeholders in the Process. The decision of the Ministerial meeting to lay emphasis on continuous engagement with destination countries and other dialogue forums, and make an

addition of four important thematic areas of action to catch up with the rising regional and global trends in migration issues bear significance in developing future strategies and courses of action.

Operationalization of the five thematic areas under the Colombo Process is moving us to the right direction. I commend the work of the five thematic areas working groups, which have given initial guidelines and strategy for mutual cooperation and collaboration in the respective areas. I think the next step is to hold further consultations and crystalize the ideas based on consensus in order to reflect them into actions. There is a need to take the labour destination countries and relevant regional consultative forums such as Abu Dhabi Dialogue in full confidence while implementing the agreed recommendations of the Thematic Areas Working Groups.

We have many regional and international initiatives in promoting safe, orderly and regular migration for the benefit of all. Our efforts should be directed to establish constructive and cooperative linkages in all these good initiatives. As one of the latest initiative, may I mention here that the 18th summit of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation held in Kathmandu agreed to collaborate and cooperate on safe, orderly and responsible management of labour migration from South Asia to ensure safety, security and wellbeing of their migrant workers in the destination countries outside the region. We have IOM, the leading agency working in the field of migration, we also have the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD), the Global Migration Group (GMG), etc. which we have been using and can be effectively utilized in the coming days as platforms for raising our concerns, and linking our activities in fulfilling the national and regional as well as global objectives as laid out in the goals and targets of the SDGs, Addis Ababa Action Agenda and in the preparatory process of the Global Compact on Migration.

The New York Declaration on Refugee and Migrants adopted by the UNGA last September has two compacts to negotiate in the run-up to the proposed UN conference in 2018- one on refugee and the second on safe, orderly and regular migration. As per the agreed modalities circulated in January 2017, the 1st phase of discussion will start from April and last till November 2017. As some of the discussion has to be structured in Geneva, we can hold discussion on the potential role of CP in contributing to the preparatory process.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The positive contribution of migrant workers in inclusive growth and sustainable development of origin, transit and destination countries has been well recognized. The contribution of migrant workers to the host countries is quantifiable in terms of physical development and prosperity, whereas the remittances they send back home also contribute to the social and economic development of the sending countries. In the changing context, providing financial literacy to migrant workers and their family has become a must for legally channelizing and utilizing the remittance money into the economic growth and development of the origin country.

Female migrant workers from our region form a huge labour force, but they are still exposed to the vulnerable situations such as poor working conditions, low wages, potential violence and mental and physical exploitation. Concrete measures for strengthening international co-operation in protecting migrant workers, and particularly female migrant workers, are necessary to ensure curbing human trafficking, violence, abuse and exploitation.

In cases of disasters and emergencies, the Migrants in Countries in Crisis initiative taken under the leadership of IOM has brought new possibilities of handling them more effectively. I see advantages in linking parts of the efforts of the CP with this initiative.

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

During Nepal's Chairmanship, we would continue working in line with the objective of CP and on the thematic areas as mandated by the Ministerial meeting of last August. We are very happy to give continuity to this important platform, which was originally created in 2003 and continuously strengthened and enriched by various Member States with their hard efforts, during their chairmanship. I take this opportunity, once again, to thank all the previous chairs of this Regional Consultative Process, who have contributed in various ways in leading this organization. Our partners, including IOM and SDC, always deserve appreciation.

Meanwhile, as Chair-in-Office of the Ambassadorial process in Geneva, I would continue broader consultation with the capital in suggesting the strategies and priorities to be taken in the days ahead and the possible date of holding the next Senior Officials Meeting under Nepal's chairmanship. It would be brought to discussion at the next meeting at an appropriate level.

Finally, we need to work in collaborative way to fulfil the objective of CP, and in this context we hope to receive continued support and constructive feedback from all the Colombo Process Member States, IOM, SDC and other stakeholders in making this process effective and capable of providing results for mutual benefits.

I thank you all.