

Chair's Remarks: Ministerial Consultation

1. Opening Ceremony

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is an honour to open this 5th Ministerial Consultation of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue. I am grateful to you all for attending, and look forward to a series of fruitful discussions over the next 24 hours.

Allow me to thank, in particular, H.E. Nasser bin Thani Juma Al Hamli, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation, for hosting us here in Dubai, and I look forward to handing over the Chairmanship of the ADD to him in a few minutes time.

Before I do, allow me to offer a few thoughts on this Ministerial Consultation. As Ministers, it presents us with the opportunity to set priorities for multilateral and bilateral engagement on issues relating to human mobility within our region over the course of the next two years.

Throughout Sri Lanka's Chairmanship, there has been significant progress in terms of developing and implementing new programmes, underpinned by excellent relations between countries of origin and destination. Much of that has been due to role of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue in bringing our governments together to achieve consensus wherever it can be found.

Together, we have taken important steps forward on critical issues relating to the protection and empowerment of temporary migrant workers, particularly in relation to recruitment and skilling, and we have developed innovative schemes to leverage the benefits of technology in improving governance. We have maintained our close relations at a time when around the world, we are seeing increased division.

So, looking towards the future, with the 6th Ministerial Consultation in mind, it is important to ask what more we can do. Which other countries are willing to come forward and to establish partnerships in current thematic programmes? How can their involvement be supported by our stakeholders? What new areas and emerging challenges do we need to address? And how can we cooperate to address them?

If we can spend the next 24 hours thinking deeply about these questions, we have the opportunity to outline a programme for the next two years that not only builds on our achievements over the last two, but that goes beyond that and puts our region at the forefront of global innovation in the governance of mobility.

As a region, we are also witnessing unique changes. Growth rates in countries of origin mean that wages are starting to catch up with those of the developed world,

while economies across the Gulf are looking to diversify and focus increasingly on services, high value manufacturing and finance. These changes will present their own opportunities and challenges.

Millions of our citizens cross national borders throughout this region, taking advantage of the opportunities of economic growth to find work. Their contributions to the development of both countries of origin and destination are huge. If this model has emerged as a result of necessity, it nonetheless has the potential to become a framework for an alternative way of thinking about human mobility.

So let me ask you to take as our starting point the relationship of trust and the spirit of cooperation that has been established within the framework of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and think about how best we can work together over the next two years.

Thank you.

2. Handover Ceremony

I'm grateful to your Excellencies for your opening remarks.

It has been a great honour for Sri Lanka to Chair the Abu Dhabi Dialogue. We have learned a great deal as a result, and I believe we have helped to bring about significant achievements as well. In that regard, I look forward to the report to the Ministerial Consultation on current thematic programmes tomorrow.

Before I welcome the UAE as the new Chair, allow me first to take this opportunity to encourage other Member States who have yet to Chair the Abu Dhabi Dialogue to give it serious consideration. It may be two years away, but it is never too early to start planning! Moreover, a volunteering Member States would, of course, automatically join the Troika.

I am pleased to be handing over the Chairmanship of the ADD to the United Arab Emirates. The UAE has continued to champion of the ADD throughout its eleven years of existence, and makes a significant contribution to its continued success. The UAE's Chairmanship will strengthen the centrality of the ADD to our region's governance.

Without further ado, I would therefore like to welcome H.E. Nasser bin Thani Juma Al Hamli as the new Chair of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and, on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, I wish him and his government the very best of luck.

Thank you.