

Joint Press Release: Ministry of Health, IOM & WHO

Leaving No one Behind: A Call to Action on Migrant Health

Colombo, 23 February 2017 – To address the health challenges posed by increasingly mobile populations, health leaders today adopted the ‘Colombo Statement’ which calls for international collaboration to improve the health and well-being of migrants and their families.

“Protecting the health of mobile populations is a public health and human rights imperative. Ensuring the highest attainable standard of health for all, including migrants and refugees, is something we must all strive towards, and is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal of leaving no one behind,” emphasized Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, WHO Regional Director of South-East Asia.

The world is experiencing migration on an unprecedented scale. There are an estimated 1 billion migrants today – one in seven people. While some people migrate seeking better opportunities, others are forcibly displaced, fleeing conflict and war.

The health needs of migrants are great. However, health systems are struggling to adapt, leaving access to health services among migrant populations variable and often inadequate.

Sri Lanka is providing leadership on migrant health. It is one of the few countries with a national migration health policy. “The Migration Health Policy was introduced under the patronage of former Minister of Health and current President His Excellency Sirisena and we can proudly say that it is a comprehensive policy which covers every aspect of health issues faced by migrants,” highlighted Dr Rajitha Senaratne, Hon. Minister of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka.

Health systems must be strengthened to provide equitable, non-discriminatory migrant centred health services. Addressing the health needs of migrants reduces long-term health and social costs, enhances health security and contributes to social and economic development.

“Migrant health must be looked at as a global agenda, and SDGs should be extensively interpreted by linking the call to facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration and mobility of people (SDG 10.7) and the achievement of universal health coverage (SDG 3.8). This can only be realised through the implementation of well-managed and coordinated migration policies, which include financial risk protection and equal access to quality services”, stated Dr Davide Mosca, IOM Director of the Migration Health Division.

The Colombo Statement calls for mainstreaming migrant health into key national, regional and international agendas and promotes international solidarity for equitable migrant health policies, a shared research agenda and the development of global frameworks to ensure migrant health is protected.

The Colombo Statement was adopted on the closing day of the 2nd Global Consultation on Migrant Health, hosted by the Government of Sri Lanka, IOM and WHO. Demonstrating the high level commitment to migrant health, the President of Sri Lanka, H.E. Maithripala Sirisena, WHO Regional

Director for South-East Asia, Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, IOM Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Dr Nenette Motus and senior government representatives from over 40 countries participated in the meeting.

The momentum generated by the global consultation will be carried forward to the World Health Assembly in May 2017, where 194 countries will deliberate on priority actions to protect migrants' right to health.