Sri Lanka takes positive steps towards Ratification of ILO C188 – Work in Fishing Convention, 2007:

Draft regulations presented to Minister of Fisheries and Minister of Labour

Developed with technical support from the ILO, and funding from DFAT and Government of Norway.

Colombo (ILO News)-

Furthering Sri Lanka’s commitment towards promoting decent work in the country’s fisheries sector, draft regulations pertaining to ILO C188 - Work in Fishing Convention, 2007, were presented today to Hon. Douglas Devananda, the Minister of Fisheries, Hon. Manusha Nanayakkara, the Minister of Labour and Foreign Employment, Hon. Piyal Nishantha de Silva, State Minister of Fisheries, HE Paul Stephens, Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, and Simrin Sigh, Director, ILO Country Office for Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Marking a significant milestone in fostering dialogue and collaboration, a C188 insight forum also took place. Globally, jobs in the fisheries sector are among the most riskiest. C188; an international labour standard established by the ILO, sets standards and recommendations aimed at ensuring decent working conditions for those engaged in the fishing industry worldwide. It addresses various aspects of labour in the fishing sector, including working hours, occupational safety and health, living conditions on board vessels, amongst other aspects.

In Sri Lanka, the fisheries sector is an important contributor to food security, nutrition, trade, employment, and export earnings. It is also amongst the most impacted sectors by the prevailing economic crisis. Signifying the Government’s commitment to strengthening the country’s fisheries sector and improving decent work conditions, the draft regulations will act as a key documentation in supporting the development and submission of a Joint Cabinet paper by the Ministry of Labour and Foreign Employment and the Ministry of Fisheries in furthering Sri Lanka's journey towards ratification of C188.

Speaking at the event, Hon. Manusha Nanayakkara, Minister of Labour and Foreign Employment expressed strong support towards Sri Lanka ratifying C188, stating that “providing dignity of work to fishers is not only a legal obligation but also a moral duty, and it is a part of larger efforts by the Ministry to create a more robust social-security system for Sri Lanka’s private sector workers including fishers”.

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Hon. Minister of Fisheries expressed his confidence in Sri Lanka finalizing and ratifying the convention with support of all partners, stating “fishers must be accorded the right and protection they deserve, the ministry wholeheartedly endorses the decent work agenda for fisheries”.

Ratification and compliance of C188 will see substantial benefits in not only improving working conditions, creating additional employment, and facilitating labour retention, but also generating significant economic returns to Sri Lanka by enhancing the sector’s global competitiveness. It also sets the foundation for long term growth and sustainability of the country’s fisheries sector.

“Enhancing economic opportunities for all Sri Lankans to thrive is an important feature of Australia’s development support to Sri Lanka. Fisheries is of particular importance as a driver for growth, and decent work - investments in blue swimmer crab, giant prawns, and sea cucumber value chains has seen dividends that are uplifting lives, and the sector. We hope the government will move forward in its journey to ratifying C188,” said HE Paul Stephens, Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka.

The insight forum provided a valuable platform for stakeholders to gain insights into the draft regulations, engage in open discussions, share perspectives, and understand the way forward in Sri Lanka’s journey towards ratification of C188.

Highlighting the importance of the convention, Simrin Singh, Director, ILO Country Office for Sri Lanka and the Maldives, said “As Sri Lanka works towards strengthening its economic recovery and resilience, ratification of C188 offers both dignity and protection for workers, and is a golden opportunity for industry gains and growth. We are encouraged by the commitment from both the Ministry of Fisheries, and the Ministry of Labour. The ILO will continue to steadfastly support Sri Lanka's promising efforts towards the earliest ratification of C188”.

The Ministry of Fisheries together with The Ministry of Labour and Foreign Employment have taken positive steps leading towards ratification of C188 through the coordination and technical support from the ILO Country Office for Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Supported by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Government of Norway, ILO Sri Lanka's Local Empowerment through Economic development and Reconciliation (LEED+) project, is part of the ILO’s global Jobs for Peace and Resilience programme.

The ILO is the United Nations specialized agency for the world of work. It sets international labour standards, provides technical assistance, and engages in policy dialogue to address pressing issues related to employment, labour rights, and social protection. The ILO works closely with governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations, and other stakeholders to achieve its mission of advancing social justice and promoting decent work worldwide.