Draft Colombo Statement for
the 3rd Meeting of the Asia-Europe Political Forum
(Colombo, Sri Lanka, 5-7 April 2019)

As of 26 March 2019

1. We, the leaders and representatives of over 25 political parties and political groups from Asia and Europe, gathered here in Colombo, the capital city of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, for the Third Meeting of the Asia-Europe Political Forum (AEPF). The Forum was hosted by the Government of Sri Lanka and actively participated by the United National Party, Sri Lanka Freedom Party and Sri Lanka People's Front, on April 5 - 7, 2019 on the main theme: "How political parties can handle the challenges of social security and employment of the increasing aged population as well as items of current urgency in the Asian region".

2. We recognized the importance of placing ageing in developing agendas, stressing the Governments to promote in adopting and implementing adequate policies in order to address the concurrent challenges with ageing population; poverty, discrimination, less accessibility to health services, education, employment, information and communications, with full consideration of the discussions in the United Nations General Assembly.

3. We emphasized that, as part of endeavors to complement national efforts to fully implement international commitment to measure ageing population, the 3rd Meeting of the AEPF has promoted essential international cooperation.

(Current Situation)

4. We took note that the number of persons aged 80 or over is projected to increase from 137 million in 2017 to 425 million in 2050, according to World Population Prospects of the United Nations Department of Economic Social Affairs in 2017. We also noted that there are 901 million people aged 60 or over, comprising 12.3 percent of the global population (7.55 billion).

5. However, as we acknowledged that the potential of older persons is a potential basis for future development, it is believed to enable society to rely increasingly on the skills, experience and wisdom of older persons.

(Relevance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals)

6. We agreed that ageing is likely to have far-reaching implications for all sectors of society, including labour markets, financial and health systems; political participation; demand for goods and services; urban planning and infrastructure development; as well as family structures and intergenerational relations.

7. In order to ensure progress towards implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG), we emphasized that it is essential to prepare for the economic and social transformations associated with ageing, taking into account the fact that population ageing provides significant opportunities for sustainable development which are associated with the active participation of older generations in the economy, labour market and society at large. In view of their experience, knowledge and skills, older persons are important actors in communities, making key contributions in the interrelated areas of economic development, care work, political participation, and social capital.

8. We shared a common understanding that there is an urgent need to bolster the collection, analysis and use of good quality data on age to effectively evidence the equitable delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

(Challenges)

9. We acknowledged that in many national settings, population ageing has raised concerns about the ability of countries to provide adequate social protection for older persons, such as having pressure on public health systems to adapt to meet the growing demand for age-appropriate care, including long-term care, services and technologies for prevention, detection and treatment of diseases.

10. We also expressed concern to another persistent challenge of ageism, having prejudice and discrimination towards older persons at individual and institutional levels, which undermine older persons' status as rights holders including their right to autonomy, participation, access to education and training, health and social care, security and decent employment.

11. We noted that abuse of older women and men—physical, emotional or financial—has now been acknowledged as a growing concern for all countries, including the gaps in data and statistics on older persons present another important issue.

12. With concern, we acknowledged that considerable obstacles to further integration and full participation in the global economy remain for developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, as well as for some countries with economies in transition.

13. With these backdrops, we reached to an agreement that the ending poverty in old age will require an expansion of social protection provisions and benefits, inclusion in the formal labour markets, broader opportunities based on older persons' skills, knowledge and experience, and acknowledging and compensating for the unpaid services provided by them.

(Policy Implications)

14. We emphasized the importance of international cooperation to conduct research on ageing and age-related issues as an important instrument for the formulation of policies on ageing, based on reliable and harmonized indicators developed by, inter alia, national and international statistical organizations.

15. We stressed the primary responsibility of Governments in promoting, providing and ensuring access to basic social services, bearing in mind specific needs of older persons. We called upon Members to promote, in accordance with their national priorities, equitable and affordable access to sustainable basic physical and social infrastructure for all, without discrimination, including affordable serviced land, housing, modern and renewable energy, safe drinking water and sanitation, safe, nutritious and adequate food, waste disposal, sustainable mobility, health-care services and family planning, education, culture and information and communications technologies, and to ensure that these services are responsive to the rights and needs of older persons.

16. We encouraged Members to adopt social policies that promote the development of community services for older persons, taking into account the psychological and physical aspects of ageing and the special needs of older women and older persons with disabilities.

17. We took note of the importance of the initiatives and investments to enable older persons to access services such as health, care, transport and housing are also needed. We recommended the Members to increase efforts to raise awareness of the 2002 Madrid Plan of Action and identify key priority areas for its implementation, including empowering older persons and promoting their rights,

bearing in mind the crucial importance of intergenerational family interdependence, solidarity and reciprocity for social development, raising awareness of ageing issues and building national capacities, as well as promoting and supporting initiatives to advance a positive public image of older persons and their multiple contributions.

18. We highlighted the importance of enhancing coordination and cooperation with global and regional intergovernmental organizations, bi-lateral and multi-lateral development partners, international and national non-governmental organizations. We encouraged national and local policy development and implementation to be human rights-based, age-sensitive and all-age-inclusive, with measurable indicators to track progress on the situation of older persons.

19. We also welcomed and appreciated the views of the experts of Asia and Europe which effectively addressed the current circumstances on ageing population with future strategies in alleviating the challenges we face.

20. We agreed that with collective efforts, UN agencies, policymakers, civil society and other stakeholders can support setting a new agenda of active and healthy ageing that can reduce the vulnerabilities and enhance the rights, capabilities and resilience of older persons, and thus fulfil the pledge of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

21. We expressed our profound gratitude to the people and the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, for their excellent arrangements to ensure the resounding success of the 3rd Meeting of the Asia-Europe Political Forum. Our special thanks went to H.E. Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka and H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, for their full support for this historic gathering. We also reconfirmed our deep appreciation for the ICAPP Secretariat's invaluable role and efficient preparations in organizing the meeting. The 4th Meeting of the AEPF will be held in Europe in 2020, pursuant to the Terms of Reference, which states the regional-rotation rule on alternating the hosting country between Asia and Europe.

Adopted unanimously on this 6th day of April, 2019 in Colombo, Sri Lanka