

**138<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union  
Geneva, Switzerland**

**General Debate**

**Contribution by Senator Catryna Bilyk**

**Australian Delegation**

***Strengthening the global regime for migrants and refugees: the need for evidence-based policy solutions***

Madam President, Mr Secretary General, honoured colleagues

My colleague Senator Macdonald spoke earlier in the debate about Australia's support for the global compacts, and our commitment to be part of the global solution to strengthen governance for migrants and refugees, and cooperation to tackle the root causes of displacement.

At the opening of this general debate we heard from the Director-General of the International Organization of Migration that never before have so many people been on the move, and that one out of every seven people in the world are migrants. He also told us that fifty percent of migrants are women, and very large numbers of unaccompanied children. We need protection systems to make sure that people on the move are safe.

The High Commissioner for Refugees called on us to approach solutions to displacement in a principled manner.

Today I would like to speak about measures Australia is taking to address particular elements of the *2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*; that is combating trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and contemporary forms of slavery; and identifying those who have been trafficked and providing assistance to them.

In the parliamentary sphere, we have completed two recent inquiries on the issue. In December 2017 the Australian Parliament's Joint Committee on

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade tabled a report titled *In Plain Sight*. This report addressed measures to better combat modern slavery, and also inquired into the effectiveness of the United Kingdom's *Modern Slavery Act 2015*. The committee recommended the creation of similar legislation in Australia, and found that Australia had taken important steps to combat trafficking, but that more could be done, specifically to support victims.

In July 2017, the Joint Committee on Law enforcement completed an inquiry into human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices. This report made 20 recommendations to address slavery, slavery-like conditions and forced labour, prevent human trafficking and improve support to victims.

In 2016, Australia's Foreign Minister launched Australia's *International Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery*. Regionally, Australia is committed to the *Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime*. The Bali Process is co-chaired by Indonesia and Australia and has more than 48 members.

Efforts within the Bali Process have led to strengthened regional cooperation, the development of best practice guidelines, and coordinated law and justice operations to disrupt people smuggling and human trafficking. We want this momentum in the region to continue, but we recognize that more needs to be done.

Australia actively champions a global, joined up approach to tackling this issue. We participate in the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) and Alliance 8.7. Chaired by Australia and with Argentina as the Deputy Chair, Alliance 8.7 is a partnership of governments, UN agencies, business and civil society to tackle forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, and child labour.

With continued focus on these issues, Australia hopes to make further progress and stands ready to be part of the global efforts to reduce human trafficking and address modern slavery.