

**138th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
Geneva, Switzerland**

General Debate

Contribution by Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald, Leader of the Australian Delegation

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

Madam President, Fellow Delegates.

Australia is an immigrant nation – with one quarter of our population of 23 million either born overseas or with at least one parent born overseas.

Indeed I was reminded of this last night at a wonderful reception hosted by Lithuania celebrating with Estonia, Latvia, Finland and Poland their 100 years of nationhood.

Many refugees from those countries in darker times settled in Australia (as did citizens from most countries in this room) and all of those refugees or migrants have contributed in so many ways to our strong and successful multicultural society – and our economy!

Interestingly one of the newest Senators in the Australian Parliament is a Black African woman from the Kikuyu Tribe of Kenya who was born and raised there and now helps shape the destiny of Australia as a legislator.

We are also justifiably proud that we are home to one of the oldest continuous cultures on earth. Australia's Indigenous peoples and our strong multicultural history provide us with one of our greatest strengths - our cultural diversity.

However we recognise that voluntary and involuntary human movement globally is a critical challenge of our time. Agreeing and implementing an improved processes to manage human movement caused by political, economic and social conflicts and environmental instability, will require political will as well as practical action.

Australia welcomed the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants as a way of guiding a well-managed and humane response to the mass movement of people.

To this end, we support strong and practical outcomes from the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees - which for Australia means amongst other things;

- Reaffirmation of the need to address the root causes of irregular migration and displacement
- commitment to existing mechanisms and obligations
- ensuring the interests of the Indo-Pacific region are coordinated as we advocate for those States who have not yet done so, to become party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol
- promoting models for global cooperation in countering, reducing and preventing irregular migration, including human trafficking and people smuggling – and stopping the deaths at sea which are a tragic consequence of the illegal trafficking in our part of the world.

We have a positive migration story to tell, and we continue to benefit from the social and economic rewards of migration. We see diversity as an investment against marginalisation and extremism; it helps our communities unite rather than divide.

We work closely with the UNHCR to play our part in the resettlement of Refugees in an orderly, planned, and fully resourced way.

And we continue to improve our economy and our diversity, by a regular and planned migration program.

Australia is in the top three countries for resettlement of refugees referred by the UNHCR and we have one of the most successful settlement and integration programs in the world.

Australia is keen to play its part in strengthening global governance for migrants and refugees. It is essential that we, in cooperation with all Nations, tackle the root causes of displacement. If we can do this, this debate will not be needed in the future!

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Debate.

My colleague Senator Bilyk will use the balance of my seven minutes to speak later about Australia's work combatting modern Slavery.