



Statement by
Hon'ble Tshogpon Jigme Zangpo
Speaker of the National Assembly of Bhutan

138th Assembly of the
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**Statement by Hon'ble Tshogpon Jigme Zangpo, Speaker of the National Assembly
of Bhutan at the 138th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva**

Madame President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to convey to this august Assembly the warm greetings of His Majesty the King and the fraternal sentiments of the Parliament of Bhutan. I also take this opportunity to extend my warmest congratulations to Madame President on your election. We wish you success in steering the work of the IPU and its deliberations during this Assembly.

Madame President,

Migration is an issue, perhaps, as old as human civilization. People have always been on the move in pursuit of better livelihood, peace and other reasons. But never have we been confronted with migration on a scale we are witnessing today. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2016 was a positive development, and we now need to lend our support to the ongoing inter-governmental processes to finalize the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees. We are confident that the two Compacts will strengthen international cooperation in addressing the myriad challenges facing us. It is timely for us as parliamentarians to provide our perspectives on these two important and complex global issues, and therefore, my delegation commends the choice of the theme for the general debate on “strengthening the global regime for migrants and refugees”.

Madame President

The foremost priority for Bhutan as a small, least developed and landlocked country, with less than a million inhabitants, is safeguarding the security and sovereignty of

the country. Throughout history, our country has faced serious challenges to security, including from migration pressures from a highly populous region, where people constantly move in huge and unregulated numbers, across porous borders in search of better economic opportunities. We have overcome these challenges through the wisdom and foresight of our leaders and the determination of the Bhutanese people.

Two factors have been crucial to our success. The first is the Institution of Monarchy. Our King represents the strength and unity of our small and vulnerable country and have ensured the security of the country. Our Kings have been the agent for change and have introduced far-reaching socio-economic and political reforms, including the voluntary introduction of parliamentary democracy in 2008. The second is our culture and way of life, which have evolved over the centuries and have come to represent the essence of our collective national identity and survival.

Madam President,

Bhutan welcomes the international efforts to strengthen the global regimes on Migration and Refugees, and appreciates the contributions being made by all countries and stakeholders in shaping the two Global Compacts.

The Compact on Migration will enhance cooperation to address all types of migration but at the same time we should be mindful of the adverse impacts migration could have on developing countries, particularly on small and vulnerable countries like Bhutan. We therefore welcome the inclusion in the draft document, proposals on national sovereignty and the right of states to exercise sovereign jurisdiction with regard to national migration policy in keeping with their national realities and priorities. Bhutan also appreciates the positive contributions of migrant workers. In this regard, we acknowledge the benefits we derive from the presence of more than 100,000 migrant workers, which constitutes around 15 % of our population.

Madam President,

I would like to draw your attention to climate change and its linkage to migration. Sea-level rise, desertification, floods, etc. are leading to large-scale displacements and migration. Bhutan also has not been spared the adverse effects of climate change, despite our strong and well-recognised environment policies and actions. Melting glaciers, erratic and unseasonal rainfalls, frequent floods, among others, are increasingly effecting the livelihoods of our people, most of whom are dependent on agriculture. I hope, in our discourse during this Assembly, the threat of climate change and its implication on the subject of our deliberations will find a respectable mention.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represent the global commitment to make this world a better place. With several of these goals related to migration, it is very clear that migration has a positive role in the realisation of the SDGs. Bhutan has mainstreamed the SDGs in its national development plans, and the country remains committed to the realization of the goals.

Madam President,

In Bhutan, we pursue the development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, and our Constitution prescribes that country ***“shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness”***. We are further guided by our Constitution to create conditions that will enable a good and compassionate society rooted in Buddhist ethos and universal human values. Bhutan views the subject of our discourse today, from the prism of these values, while preserving the peace and security of our nation.

Madam President,

I look forward to a successful outcome from our deliberations, and thank you for your kind attention. Thank you, and Tashi Delek !