

**CABINET OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**



Address of the President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia,  
m-r Talat Xhaferi at the 138 IPU Assembly, at the General debate on the theme  
"Strengthening the global regime for migrants and refugees: the need for  
evidence-based policy solutions"

March 2018, Genève

Distinguished Chairperson,

Distinguished fellow Deputies,

Ladies and gentleman,

Migration as a phenomenon is not a new occurrence; its existence dates back to the very beginning of the human civilization. Certainly the globalization process influences these migration flows making them more intensive. Thus, according to the statistics, today, around 258 million people or 3, 4% percent of the world population lives out of their states of birth. The reasons for migration are also known long ago. The first reason being the socio-economic, in other words the search for a better life. The second reason for migration is escape from countries

and regions caught in war conflicts, violence and disrespect of the war and humanitarian law, dysfunction of the legal state or, a great natural disaster, which means exposure of people to dangers that jeopardize their lives. In the first case, we are speaking of economic migrants while in the second case; we refer to them as refugees, although these two categories are very often closely connected.

Ladies and gentleman,

In the recent years, Europe is facing a massive refugee and migrant crisis. Only through our state, the Republic of Macedonia, which is part of the so called Balkans route, several hundred thousands of migrants and refugees have transited. Nevertheless, some analysis and information indicate that the refugee crisis is not over yet, and that it is time for all of us, collectively and individually as states to take concrete actions. Often, we boast with numbers - how many migrants we have accepted or how many of them have transited through our territory. However, we must not forget that migrants are not numbers, to say the least; they are human beings as are we. The difference lies in the fact that each one of them, no matter if he or she is an economic migrant or a refugee, bears a very sad story. Very often, women and children migrants above all, are exposed to the roughest forms of violence or are victims of human trafficking, while the organized transnational crime makes billions of dollars over their tragic fates.

Ladies and gentleman,

Many international documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which this year marks 70 years since the adoption in the United Nations, oblige us to strengthen the position of the migrants and refugees. An additional

obligation to us imposes the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted in 2016, which demonstrated the determination of the UN States to the development of the Global compact for refugees and the Global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The Republic of Macedonia fully supports these two documents and hopes that as agreed, they will be adopted this July and we will implement them, both on national level, as well in the bilateral and multilateral relations.

Needless to remind, that our organization, as one of the oldest international organizations, has adopted several documents which refer directly or indirectly to migrants and refugees. Certainly, it would be ideal if we could stop immediately all war conflicts and if we could secure a sustainable economic growth in all states. But, at this moment, this is closer to Utopia than to reality. Therefore, we are here today, as one of the oldest international organization to discuss and to offer certain political solutions which shall be founded on true and real arguments. I believe that as National Parliaments, using the mechanisms of the parliamentarism, we can make big changes. For example, organizing public debates and benefiting from our cooperation with the NGOs, we can do a lot in overcoming the series of prejudices and stereotypes relating to migrants. Namely, the opinion that migrants are taking something ours is prevailing. There is a tendency to forget that the overall inclusion of migrants will benefit the migrants themselves as well as the host country. Furthermore, through the oversight role of the Parliaments, we can control how the executive power, in particular, how the relevant ministries are fulfilling their responsibilities towards the migrants. I shall also mention the parliamentary diplomacy, which through the cooperation of the Parliaments in the region and

beyond can provide tangible contribution in the more intensive and efficient cooperation between the states when migrants and migration flows are in question.

Ladies and gentleman,

Parts of these views are based on the experience that Republic of Macedonia has gained during the intensive migration flows that transited through our state. Just to remind you, several hundred thousands of migrants passed through Macedonia which is part of the so called Balkan route. Still, we managed, even with our limited recourses, to provide everything that is stipulated on the international humanitarian laws, providing those people, at least, the basic living conditions and transit through our state. Speaking of which, I have to mention the cooperation with the international organizations, above all the UNHCR, the Red Cross and others. Furthermore, assisted by the NGO Sector, we made some qualitative step forward in creating a positive perception and thoughts among the citizens in regards with the migrants. Also, as I have already said at the very beginning, migrants, regardless if they are economic or refugees from war conflicts are humans, rather than numbers. A civilization value of each individual, society, state or international organization is to help each human.

Thank you for your attention!