

Speech at the 138th IPU General Assembly
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Senator Isaac Figir
Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia

Ladies and Gentlemen:

If there is one phenomenon that defines our age it must be the displacement of people. Everywhere around the world people are on the move, trying to find safety for themselves and for their loved ones, to find employment for themselves and a future for their children. People are also ejected from places they called home for generations with the so-called justification that they are of the wrong ethnic group, the wrong religion, the wrong skin color.

These people very often move because they have no choice. It is not a human characteristic to pick up and leave your home, the place where your ancestors are buried. In my home island in Micronesia people would refuse professional and business opportunities to remain close to where their customs and traditions hold sway. Yet they are subject to the effects of climate change. They and their fellow Pacific Islanders will have to move to escape the rise of the sea-level or the loss of their fresh water reserves due to salt water seepage.

Billions of people are on the move everywhere around the world. Even in the Pacific, migrants and refugees end up on the shores of our island looking for a future for their families: from South Asia, from the Middle East, and elsewhere, seeking a better life, pursuing security and maybe happiness.

We know the fulcrum of these movements: the tragic story of Syria where millions have been forced from their homes; the

other millions in Iraq where the tragic legacy of war still displaces millions of people. And also the unresolved problems of millions of Palestinians decades after the events that created them.

Maybe we get used to hearing about them in the news, and become numb. I suggest that every country should fight that numbness. This is a problem of global magnitude that demand global solutions.

But thinking globally also means acting locally. We in the Micronesia this year are holding a nationwide debate for Law Day, celebrating the Rule of Law. The debate is a competition open to secondary school students nationwide. The topic this year is whether Micronesia should abide by international standards in its treatment of migrants and refugees. Hopefully this nationwide contest will get our young people to start thinking about these issues.

We have also made a voluntary contribution to the IPU to spend as it wishes to deal with the problems of migrants and refugees. We contributed about \$100,000, which is admittedly small, but which represents per capita one dollar for every man woman and child in our country.

The point is that no country is too big to care or too small to evade responsibility when it comes to migrants and refugees.

In particular we would like to appeal to countries to appeal to the United Nations not to decrease support for the organization dealing with Palestinian refugees.

We urge all countries to do what it can to settle the problem of Syria. We are encouraged that the IPU is taking an active role in it.

And whatever is being done, rest assured that we in Micronesia stand ready to do our share, however small that might be. Thank you very much.