

**Republic of Tunisia**

**Assembly of the Representatives of the People**

**Speech by Honorable Mohamed Ennaceur**

**Speaker of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People**

**at the 138th session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union**

**Geneva : 24-28 March 2018**

**In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate**

**- Honorable. Gabriela Guevas Barron, President of the Inter-parliamentary Union**

**- Distinguished Heads and Members of the delegations**

**-Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is a great pleasure and honour to contribute with you today to this conference and I would like to convey the greetings of your Tunisian colleagues, Members of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People.

I am also pleased to extend my congratulations to Mrs. Gabriela Barron, the new President of the Inter- parliamentary Union on her brilliant success as well as my wishes of success in her duties at the head of this deep- rooted organization.

On this occasion, I would also like to appreciate the efforts made by the Inter-parliamentary Union to support consultation between the parliamentarians of the world in order to establish peace, promote dialogue, enrich cooperation between peoples, and devote the values of democracy and human rights with an aim to achieve sustainable development.

In this context, the topic of "**migrants and refugees**" which is the subject of our discussions today, falls within the endeavors and initiatives that aim at intensifying cooperation in order to succeed to reach a consensus on common positions on this issue which has represented a preoccupation of all the countries of the world.

Tunisia is also concerned with this preoccupation, thus, it has engaged early and seriously through its commitment to provide the decent conditions for migrants in countries of migration and in supporting the international efforts to combat illegal migration through both bilateral and multilateral cooperation especially with the European Union, the International Organization for Migration, the International Labor Organization and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**Honorable. President,**

**Distinguished Parliamentarians,**

Despite its difficult political, economic and security conditions, our country succeeded in dealing with the refugee situation, especially with the large number of refugees coming from Libya in 2011 after the revolution of freedom and dignity.

It should be noted that new Tunisian Constitution, which was ratified in 2014, provided for in its Twenty-sixth article the rights of refugees to Political asylum and prohibit surrendering persons who have been granted political asylum.

Our country in cooperation with the relevant international structures has succeeded in formulating a **National strategy for the promotion of migration** which was officially presented in July 2017 and focus on the following prominent elements:

- Good governance of migration at the national, regional and local levels within a participatory approach that addresses all aspects of migration
- To enhance the contribution of Tunisians abroad to the economic, social and cultural development process, as well as to create the necessary policies and mechanisms to consolidate their relationship with their country of origin.
- Respect for the foreign migrants including Tunisian workers and refugees, rights and dignity against arbitrary practices and their defense without discrimination.

Moreover, the Tunisian authorities are elaborating a draft law on asylum that provides a set of basic principles which constitutes a framework for the definition of the refugee in accordance with the international conventions and international human rights law, in addition to the aspects of protection and the duties of refugees, as well as the establishment of a National Asylum Authority.

**Honourable . President,**

**Distinguished Parliamentarians,**

The world leaders' political will to protect the rights of migrants and refugees, save lives and share responsibility represents a strategic shift in the way of dealing with this phenomenon by the international community and falls within the framework of the comprehensive treatment of this issue. It is also considered a strong will that derives its importance from two factors:

**First: New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants :** It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2016 to represent an unprecedented political commitment because it is oriented towards the peoples and those affected in such a way and strengthen the mechanism that ensure their access to the necessary support.

We hope that this declaration will have the same political value as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights so as to radically change the way immigrants are treated and will lead to the provision of a lot of additional support to refugees in the world not only in terms of funding but also in terms of resettlement, legal means, the possibility of family reunification and opening of humanitarian roads.

**Second: Draft Pact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration** that was stated in the New York Declaration and gave the permission to enter into broad negotiations in order to be adopted at an international conference to be held in Morocco at the end of 2018, which is considered a very important event because it will enable migration to be guided by a set of common principles and approaches as other areas of international relations.

**Honourable. President**

**Distinguished Parliamentarians,**

I cannot end my address without referring to the situation of the brotherly Palestinian People who live in a unique situation, where the data indicate that nearly the half of this People are refugees and are still struggling to return to their homes in Palestine. The Palestinian People have not only been displaced from their land, but have also been forcibly displaced from the places of refuge after the destruction of their camps.

In this context, we consider that improving the conditions of refugees' life is the moral responsibility of the international community. It is also at the heart of the political dimension of the conflict, in addition to the urgent need for a just and lasting political settlement of the Palestinian cause with the commitment to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy, especially the UN resolution 194 which provides for the right of Palestinian refugees to return as an inherent human right, and not a matter for bargaining with any political gains.

Finally, as we reaffirm our happiness at being among you today, we affirm that it is our duty as parliamentarians to be a driving force of proposal, initiative and action.

Our concern should not remain as a wish but must be translated into concrete actions and national, regional and international policies which allow us all to reach the supreme objective of setting up the approach based on the harmonization of migration and respect for human rights to move towards achieving the goals of sustainable development to which we have committed to reach in 2030.

Thank you for listening.

Peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you.

