



**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR
SAFE, ORDERLY AND REGULAR MIGRATION
MONDAY 6 NOVEMBER, 2017
REPUBLIC OF FIJI – MS SEEMA CHAND**

Thank you Madam Chairperson.

Fiji and the Pacific region as a whole is currently dealing with an emerging issue in relation to the projected increase of climate migrants in the Pacific, and the urgent need for not just the Pacific community, but the global community to offer adequate accommodation and assistance to those seeking refuge from rising sea levels. National boundaries have become less significant and displacement is now a regional and global responsibility. Migration as a result of displacement makes the vulnerable, more vulnerable and creates new categories of vulnerability.

Ten years ago the notion of migration caused by rising sea levels and extreme weather events was a vague possibility- something that was to play out in the distant future. However, migration as result of climate change is now a reality for many Pacific States.

In the last few months, hundreds of people have been displaced by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. As we have seen with these events, displacement of people or the migration of people due to climate change is no longer just a Pacific problem.

The work of the various international organizations have been critical in developing our understanding of disaster response and preparedness. The issue of forced migration and displacement is complex. It is caused or exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, but also linked to other factors related to human rights, gender, indigenous peoples and communities, conflict and security. Systemic and structural changes are needed. Adequate policy responses should protect the most vulnerable and build support for communities to enhance their capacities to adapt.



As a consequence of the rise in sea levels, Fiji has offered to give a permanent home to the populations of two of our closest neighbours - Kiribati and Tuvalu - in the event that current scientific projections are realized, and the rising seas envelop them altogether. We will naturally work with the region and relevant development partners to ensure human dignity in that mass movement of people when the time comes. As things stand, we have yet to establish an international legal framework for this to occur. But we hope that through the Global Compact for Safe Orderly Migration, we are at least building the consensus - that we need to adequately respond to a situation that is unique in human history.

It is imperative to note that with forced relocations and migration as a direct result of climate change and natural disasters, there is a danger of communities being broken apart, for people who have grown together through generations losing their collective identity, ownership of land including their spiritual link to indigenous land.

Fiji also acknowledges the relevance of the resolution on Climate Change and Human Rights adopted at the 35th session of the Human Rights Council earlier this year. The resolution amongst other things calls upon the OHCHR to organise an intercessional panel discussion, with the theme **“Human rights, climate change, migrants and persons displaced across international borders”**, and to submit a summary report of the panel discussion to the appropriate mechanisms to ensure that it also part of the preparatory process leading to the adoption of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

As such it is imperative that any Global Compact framework that is developed must be developed in a manner that advocates for, plans, and pre-empts individual and community needs, that ensures the relocation and migration of persons as a result of climate change is done in a manner that, protects and upholds the rights and dignities of the people involved. We must recognise that migrants, and in particular climate migrants have a unique set of priorities and that any framework that is developed must also incorporate a sustainable process for continued international engagement on migrant issues; recognise climate change as a driver of migration; and also recognise that all migration policies must be human rights based.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.