

**Mr. President,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I rise to address this august Assembly for the first time after my election as the Speaker of the Namibian National Assembly on the 21st March 2015. I am honoured to have taken over the reins from Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, a revered former President of the IPU.

I am pleased to share some thoughts on the theme of this 133RD IPU Assembly: *“The moral and economic imperative for fairer, smarter and more human migration.”* It is indeed a topic that is relevant to our current times, and worth being pursued on National and International platforms throughout the world.

The number of people around the world forcibly displaced by conflict or persecution has reached its highest total since World War II, with more than 51.2 million fleeing their country or displaced within it, which was reported by the UN refugee agency in 2014. Whether they are called migrants, refugees or asylum seekers becomes irrelevant at the time when they need

humanitarian aid and their rights as human beings need to be upheld. An estimated 13.6 million people have been displaced by conflicts in Syria and Iraq alone, constituting what the UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres dubbed a mega-crisis.

Mr. President,

Migration is not a new challenge, it has been in existence throughout human history. We have to find a beneficial consensus-based solution to the causes of this current crisis. Ignoring the root causes for this mass exodus will not help to solve this problem. As parliamentarians we have a critical role to play, in ensuring a meaningful, balanced and informed debate on this pertinent issue. This is achieved by promoting fair and effective policies addressing the real challenges that face all stakeholders and countries world-wide.

Two weeks ago the UN General Assembly adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. This universal development agenda addresses the complexity of the world problems and thereby the causes for migration. Let us all assume our roles in realizing the SDGs, to transform our world.

Namibia is not a stranger to migration. During our liberation struggle, our leaders and comrades went into exile and were hosted by our brothers and sisters in Africa and other parts of the world. We are therefore indebted to our friends who have assisted us when we were in dire need under the apartheid regime. This makes the topic of migration close to the experience of Namibians.

Mr. President,

Hon. Members,

We are living in what we call the “Global Village” and the challenges faced by one country will certainly affect other countries. We cannot afford to deal with our regional and international challenges in isolation; we cannot afford to deal with migration in isolation.

Mr. President,

Hon. Members,

As leaders of parliaments and elected representatives of our peoples, we have an obligation to create awareness in our countries, to avoid stereotypes in order to combat xenophobia; and address real challenges to social cohesion and national identity. Let us also remember that although immigration may put a strain on limited resources, it can also bring the benefit of new contributors to our ever evolving societies.

Mr. President and Honourable Members,

In conclusion,

When we debate on this most important theme, it is imperative that we not only look at addressing migration in an objective manner but that we address it as citizens of the world. We should not view migration as a regional problem, but a continental and global issue, which we work together to address.

I thank you,