**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**INTERSESSIONAL PANEL DISCUSSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, CLIMATE CHANGE, MIGRANTS AND PERSONS DISPLACED ACROSS INTERNATIONAL BORDERS**

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Friday, 6 October 2017

**Mr President, Member States of the Human Rights Council, respected speakers and state delegates, and my friends from the Civil Society. I am humbled and honoured to share this space with you, to represent the voices of Asia and Pacific youths. My name is Rae Bainteiti and I bring warm greetings from the Pacific, Kam na Mauri and Bula Vinaka.**

Let me start by highlighting that the difference between refugee migration today and Climate Change migration, is that Refugee problems were created within the country while Climate Change problems are caused by countries that are continuously burning fossil fuels. There actions have accelerated sea level rise among other impacts. The refugee migration could always return home when the war ceases or government is stable but Climate Change is permanent. We have no home to go back to and means leaving your land and severing ties to all that is important to you as indigenous people. It threatens all your human rights, your sovereignty, your culture, language and identity and well-being. **Inaction on climate change exacerbates that threat and the future of the generations to come.**

The Asia and the Pacific comprises of over 60% of the world’s population. These are young men and women aged between 15 to 24 years; which translates to about 750 million. The Asia-Pacific youth have benefitted considerably from the region’s social and economic dynamism and at the same have been significantly constraint because of variety of obstacles such as access to employment, education and health care among other issues. Climate Change is a new addition, one that is cross-cutting and one that undermines our developments.

Climate Change is one of the greatest human rights challenge of our time. It is a multiplier of threat to our security especially for women and children, the disabled, and other marginalized groups.

Climate change science is clear that the adverse impacts and the associated risks will threaten our human rights and security. From Bangladesh to Kiribati in the Pacific, the effects of climate change have touched our lives in so many ways. Frequent extreme weather patterns, increased temperatures, frequent visits of droughts, intense storm surges, riverbank and coastal erosion, bleaching of corals, increase of ocean acidification, cyclones, flooding, volcanic eruptions and sea level rise.

We are daunted by this Global issue and the only thing you can do is learn to live with less. Less fresh water sources as the sea washes over our traditional water sources and less local foods as prolonged droughts, hotter temperatures and floods destroy terrestrial and oceanic food sources. **These violates many of our human rights such as our rights to life, food, water, health, housing, culture and identity among others.**

From the Pacific perspective, relocation because of Climate Change is our last resort but if migration was to become our last option; it has to be carefully planned. When we migrate, we should do so with dignity.

It is time to act now to prevent migration and massive movements in the future. And this can be done by urging the HRC to provide a strong voice to reach the negotiations at UNFCCC by using the Right-based approach that is people centric to commit to sustainable development by investing in healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, green economy, in people; fulfilment of the Paris accord by state parties in efforts to keep global average temperatures that will limit warming to 1.5C, and sets a target concentration of carbon emission to 350 parts per million, because that is what is safe for our people; banning of all new fossil fuel infrastructures to ultimately achieve transition to 100 per cent renewable energy by no later than 2050; formulation of International Climate Change migration laws and facilities to ensure that our sovereign rights are protected for example protection of oceans EEZ and ensuring that it remains the property of indigenous people even when the islands are under water, and launching a work program to ensure that human rights are integrated into all aspects of climate actions and that youths are recognized as equal development partners.

All of these can be achieved if Governments, Civil Societies and the Public sector step up to work together. We should see this as an opportunity and not as a challenge because the more we wait and as the year goes by the problem will be harder to deal with and the region will become more fragmented in its response as situations worsening.

The value of Asia and the Pacific is – we have 4.5 billion people with diverse cultures and languages in 2.8 billion hectares of land area. The Pacific alone is home to healthy forests, oceans sunshine and unpolluted air. Are we prepared to pay for loss and damage of lives and resources?

Mr. President, all member states have the responsibility to addressing Climate Change as a Human Rights issue and fulfilling their responsibilities. Our future and very survival depends on the decisions and actions we make today. We are calling for world Leaders to commit to building a better, more just world one that is safe from the ravages of climate change for the generations to come.

Thank you Mr. President for allowing me the opportunity to share with everyone. Kiribati’s blessings of Te Mauri (Health), Te Raoi (Peace) ao Te Tabomoa (Prosperity).