



TUVALU

**Statement by the Hon Enele Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu
at the High Level Roundtable on Disasters and Climate Change**

at

WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Tuesday May 24th, 2016

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Dear Chair,

It is a pleasure to be given to speak at this important roundtable. I want to address my statement and my pledge on the plight of people displaced by the impacts of climate change.

Recent studies suggest that an average of 22.5 million people have been displaced each year by climate or weather-related disasters in the last seven years. This is equivalent to 62,000 people every day. This is an extraordinary number of people. The plight of people displaced within countries and across borders must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Apart from the suffering that displaced people feel directly, the movement of large numbers of people due to climate change can have wide ranging and very serious implications. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in their Fifth Assessment Report suggest that climate change can indirectly increase risks of violent conflicts by amplifying well documented drivers of conflicts such as poverty and economic shocks. Some suggest that the conflict in Syria had its origins in a long drought that caused people to migrate from rural areas into cities, causing civil unrest.

People displaced by the impacts of climate change may be due to sudden onset events such as floods, and storm surges. Others may be displaced by slow onset events like prolonged droughts, sea level rise, changes in rainfall patterns to name just a few.

While these people may be forced to migration across country borders, they do not fit the definition of refugees under the Refugee Convention. They often fall through the current mechanisms of protection. As such, we urgently need to establish legal protection system for people internally displaced and displaced across borders from the impacts of climate change.

So it is my pledge at this Summit to seek a UN General Assembly resolution establishing a system of legal protection for people displaced by the impacts of climate change and to ensure they are afforded the necessary support and protection of rights they need and deserve. For instance, people displaced by climate change should be given the right to request and to receive protection and humanitarian assistance from authorities and be guaranteed safe access to food and potable water, basic shelter and housing, appropriate clothing and essential medical services and sanitation.

Establishing such a legal regime should not be too difficult. We can draw from the Refugee Convention, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and existing international human rights and humanitarian law. There are many UN agencies, relief agencies, the soon to be established Task Force on Displacement established under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, non-government organisations and research institutions who could assist us in this effort.

So, Mr Chair this is my pledge. I hope everyone will join me in this critically important and urgent endeavour.

I thank you.