



# GMPA

*Global Migration Policy Associates*

*An International research, policy development,  
advisory services and advocacy group*

**GMPA General Assembly 2014  
(First Session)  
Palais Wilson  
Geneva, Switzerland  
2 September 2014**

## **Minutes**

### Participants

#### Associates:

Pablo Ceriani, Abdelhamid El Jamri, Nicola Piper (via Skype), Lisa Simeone, Ahmadou Tall, Patrick Taran, Piyasiri Wickramasakara

Staff: Rakesh Krishnan, Dylan Terry, and Katherine Youtz.

### **1) Roll Call, Introductions**

Associates Marla Assis, Anastasia Crickley, Tamirace Fakhouri, Irina Ivakhnyuk, Guillermo Kerber, Bridget Wooding and John Wrench all conveyed apologies, due to conflicting teaching or other professional commitments or due to time difference.

Appreciation was expressed to the OHCHR Secretariat of the Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW) for having facilitated the room for the Assembly meeting.

It was noted that the time and venue of the meeting was arranged to facilitate participation by three Associates who are members of the CMW.

Associates expressed concern about the absence of any other non-governmental/civil society organization at this session of the CMW; GMPA was the only NGO present at the scheduled 'informal' exchange with NGOs the previous day. (Lisa Simeone had prepared and presented a statement providing assessments of situations of two countries under review by the CMW).

Participants expressed concern that the absence of NGOs reflects a lack of support for and engagement on the ICRMW. It was suggested nonetheless that migrants rights advocates could and should also bring concerns on protection of migrants to treaty bodies of the other human

rights conventions – all of which are relevant; they should be and have been invoked on migrant protection.

## **2) GMPA Activity Reports**

The previously distributed GMPA Activity Reports for 2012 and 2013 were introduced for discussion and endorsement/approval by the Assembly.

Noting lack of official quorum for formal decisions, this session was understood as the initial part of the annual Assembly, to be followed by a virtual session and written voting procedure for adoption of reports and approval of membership candidates as per Statutory requirements.

Lisa and Nicola commented that it is impressive how much has been accomplished, especially given lack of financial resources. Lisa acknowledged the extraordinary productivity and commitment of the Research Associates, who have provided a high standard of professional support operating in a research capacity.

Patrick noted appreciation to Piyasiri for active engagement with GMPA day-to-day operations. However, more active support from other Coordinating Team members is needed.

Abdelhamid expressed appreciation to Patrick as the 'driving force' that has kept GMPA going over the past two years.

Abdelhamid suggested narrowing topical focus to particularly pressing policy concerns in order to compensate for lack of capacity; naming prioritizing the problems of migrants in transit or stranded between communities of origin and destination. For example, few advocates and service organizations provide information and support protection for sub-Saharan migrants currently stranded in North Africa.

Nicola concurred that GMPA focus more, given financial and staffing constraints, suggesting to rethink what the organization is about and what can be done collectively. She noted that much work is done by Associates in individual capacities, often on top of full-time university or other professional commitments. She urged defining clearer distinction between professional contract work and collective efforts, such as the World Social Forum on Migration.

Lisa added that other NGOs are also clearly struggling with capacity limitations, as evidenced by GMPA presence as the only NGO at the CMW opening session on 1 September. She suggested that GMPA is in a good position to mobilize NGO participation for the next CMW meeting, important to demonstrate continued civil society support for the Convention. She observed that the supervisory process breaks down without such participation because field perspective is vital to treaty body deliberations; also, industrialized migrant-dependent states dismiss the viability of the CMW as an expression of international consensus.

Pablo proposed that GMPA utilize the ICRMW 25th anniversary next year to develop an initiative to promote the Convention. He concurred with more systematically raising migrants rights issues in other treaty bodies, and noted taking initiative with the CMW to enhance dialogue and

coordination with other Convention supervisory committees, notably CRC and CERD.

Abdelhamid encouraged GMPA to reflect on its position, given demobilization of the platform of NGOs at the CMW. He agreed on emphasizing re-mobilizing civil society, noting the situation is more stark now that *December 18th* disappeared. He asked what other organizations we might work with, noting that unions worldwide have shown greater openness to organizing non-citizens, which enhances possibilities for international 'movement' work on migrant worker issues.

Nicola noted conversations with others reflecting confusion about who and what we are. “Are we a collaborative of individual researchers or a united voice on a platform of specific issues?”

Patrick agreed to developing criteria to distinguish activity done in individual professional capacity from work done in name of/on behalf of GMPA.

### **3) Finance Reports**

The previously distributed GMPA Finance Report for 2012 was introduced for discussion and approval subsequent to full membership voting poll. Secretariat apologies were conveyed for absence of 2013 Report, not yet prepared due to lack of staff time.

Patrick reminded that under Swiss law on NGOs and the GMPA Statutes, the Assembly is required to review and approve the financial report of the previous year(s). As the 2012 report shows, there have been small direct cash income and expenditures, but a large value imputed for in-kind activity of staff and voluntary contributions and significant costings for activities Associates do in name of GMPA contracted individually, as most institutional partners finance individual consultancies far more easily than through the extensive procedures and requirements for contracting with organizations. It was noted that cash and in-kind contributions from Patrick and Piyasiri have been instrumental in operation of the office.

### **4) Context and situation Assessments**

Two previously distributed notes were introduced for discussion: a Situation Assessment Note and «Assessment: Challenges, Opportunities and Constraints for GMPA at September 2014»

Patrick highlighted points in the Situation Assessment Note: labour mobility is increasing globally, especially within regional economic communities; most migration takes place within regions. Overall, governance and administrative practices are tolerating an evident expansion of deregulated, exploitative and often abusive conditions for migrant workers. Widespread discriminatory behavior towards migrants is often punctuated by xenophobic violence.

Advance of application of the normative framework appears stalemated; previously active ratification efforts on the Conventions are reversed or discouraged. Promotion of Conventions appears to have dropped off the agenda of many CSOs –except for the trade unions; a renewed call for union campaigning was issued at a global union consultation in June. In the UN arena, mention of the ICRMW appeared only as a «reference» in the outcome document of the 2013 High Level Dialogue, a distinct step back from the consistent call for ratification in all World

Conferences since 1992, in General Assembly resolutions and in Human Rights Commission/Council resolutions. The ILO is doing little if anything to actively promote ratification of ILO C-97 and ILO C-143.

The GFMD was established with a mandate as States owned process explicitly outside the UN, and explicitly avoiding discussion of normative instruments. Its discourse and that of many other actors increasingly emphasize the utilitarian, 'cost-benefit,' 'numbers versus rights' approach to migration policy. IOM asserts it is the international agency on all aspects of migration –including labour migration-- and talks protection, although it has no instrument nor mandate on protection nor to push governments to provide. The response of trade unions appears inadequate to the challenges while CSOs are simply not challenging the essentially deregulatory agenda being implemented generally regarding migrant protection and welfare.

## **5) GMPA Activity for the next period**

In view of assessments, Lisa proposed organizing an event around December 18, 2015 to remobilize civil society on the goal of ratification. That requires identifying funders who recognize need for 'regenerating this project' to provide for staff time and travel support to bring NGO representatives from around the world. She noted that GMPA has those contacts and «the commitment is still out there”. However, funding has evaporated at the local level, certainly in US, where organizations depend on interns for program work and are funded on a project-basis. She observed that in Geneva, the consistent presence of organizations long depended on to be at the table is no longer here. “The vacuum needs to be filled; someone needs to take charge of this agenda.”

Piyasiri evoked the Global Coalition on Migration (to which GMPA is observer) that received funding from MacArthur Foundation and has focused on influencing the GFMD and high-level dialogue. However, he noted divergences with perspective of GMPA, with less prominence given to rights and Convention issues. He observed that projects that that research “costs of migration” get funding, such as the KNOMAD World Bank study on diaspora remittances, that however arrived at inaccurate conclusions. GMPA did not yet formally approach Swiss Development Cooperation, but migration and development is already “covered” in their eyes. To have positioning in the arena, we need funding.

As member of the CMW, Ahmadou noticed growing disaffection for its work. He agreed on need to increase participation of civil society, concurring that an anniversary event is a good idea.

Pablo observed that ten years ago it was easier to get funds for civil society campaigning to ratify the Convention. He reiterated that civil society should be bringing migrant rights issues to other forums, including reporting during Committee sessions and following up recommendations on implementation at the national level. Former funders of migrant rights activities and organizations – Ford Foundation, MacArthur and Open Society Institute, are not interested in the Convention; increasingly they focus on “regional priorities”. He urged focus on bringing reports from regions/countries to UN treaty bodies and to explore funding options to this effect. A

recent report on lack of coordination between treaty bodies on health, education and other topics provides impetus for this approach.

Ahmadou noted that groups in Morocco are involved in migrant rights, suggesting that GMPA can help them with preparing documents/inputs to CMW; this kind of support work could provide a base for raising funds to develop GMPA activities.

Abdelhamid highlighted that the Maghreb is 'highly active' with development of an integrated approach to migration policy in Morocco, not only economic but also social and humanitarian integration. The idea is for countries to *choose* their migration, what type of migrant they want. If they look for highly-qualified workers, they have the right to do that. However, the humanitarian issue is also key. “In Morocco you also have people simply arriving.” He referred to his current work on migration in Mauritania and offered to get involved in any project with a focus on North Africa. “It is easy to mobilize the various actors in this field. The principal question is what do we want from GMPA? Do we want to work at the international or regional level?”

Abdelhamid emphasized GMPA's strength as specialists on migration. Launch of the OSEC-IOM-ILO Handbook on formulating labour migration policy together with Patrick is one example. He urged we move in direction of providing expertise on migration policy. «No one is working on this now, while GMPA is particularly well-positioned to help countries develop national policy frameworks and build capacity.”

Lisa noted that remobilizing civil society to address migrants rights in the UN system and cultivating expertise in public policy development are not contradictory. She added that Piyasiri and Patrick –among other Associates-- are recognized on the latter and this furthers our representation as a group of professionals.

Piyasiri concurred on the demand for rights-based policy approaches and capacity building, noting that IOM is asserting a major role in supporting national policy development, but not necessarily providing policy perspective that countries need regarding rights protection or labour migration. He critiqued the “migration profiles approach,” of appointing a consultant, often not from the country, to develop profiles without working closely with the government or social partner stakeholders concerned. The EU has provided major funding for this. Piyasiri noted his work in cooperation with ILO pioneering National Labour Migration Policy in Sri Lanka, which subsequently served as model for policy frameworks in several African countries. He mentioned recent support to preparing policy for Afghanistan, although perhaps premature given lack of real labour migration at present. Question is, «how do countries approach us? At the moment we aren't really networking at the country level.”

Rakesh noted his contact with an undersecretary in the Indian government who may be in a good position to facilitate a GMPA project.

Patrick concluded with appreciation for wide-ranging initial discussion of GMPA future work. He suggested further discussion (held subsequently among officers and staff) to formulate a work plan for the next year. He referred to multiple activities already set up to maintain the organization such as refining the contact database and preparation to launch the website as an

international documentation resource. Piyasiri had proposed a Working Paper Series to share our research more widely and get our name out there.

Patrick reminded that GMPA is currently involved in two major projects, notably designing the AU-ILO-IOM-ECA Africa Labour Migration Programme and conducting a comprehensive assessment of Nigeria legislation and policy in view of international and ECOWAS instruments on migration. As well, GMPA is preparing the migration round table session at the Rhodes Forum 2014 «Dialogue of Civilizations» end September, organizing the session on Human Rights and Migrant Women at the Beijing + 20 ECE NGO Forum 4 November, and preparing two workshops with 5 plus papers for the Metropolis 2014 conference in Milan 4-6 November.

### **Organizational Matters**

Announced and/or proposed candidates for officers/coordinating team are Pablo, Tamirace, Nicola, Lisa, and Patrick. Piyasiri informed that he expects to leave Geneva next year, so the question of ensuring that GMPA has a 'resident officer' will need to be addressed. This list would assure GMPA of a globally diverse coordination team.

Patrick reiterated that those standing for election should be expected to dedicate time and activity to this responsibility. He agreed to formulate brief 'terms of expectations' for officers. (Subsequently drafted.)

A proposal was raised to change terms for the officers from “President” to “Co-Convener” and “Core Group” etc. In response, it was reminded that Swiss law on NGOs explicitly requires identification of four named officers for a registered organization: President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. At least one must be resident in Switzerland. These terms were incorporated accordingly in the GMPA Statutes. The founding Assembly elected five officers including two vice-presidents (Piyasiri and Nicola) and an officer at large (Abdelhamid), as well as Secretary (Lisa) and President (Patrick). These names were included in registration documentation submitted to the Canton of Geneva.

The session concluded to permit CMW members present to attend their Committee meeting.

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Prepared by Lisa Simeone, GMPA Secretary, November 2014  
from transcript notations made by Katherine Youtz  
with editorial support by Patrick Taran