CSW62 and Migration Negotiations – Amber Atkinson, IPA Volunteer

As I pass the mid-way point of my volunteer internship, my focus continues to remain on the negotiations underway on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The productive and exhaustive first two rounds of negotiations at the UN have been completed and the Zero Draft Plus released.

At the start of CSW62 we saw thousands of international delegates descend on New York City for the commencement of the 62nd Commission on the Status of Women, which began on 12 March 2018. The IPA has been fortunate to welcome members and associates from Iowa in the States, the Philippines, and Australia, for the Commission.

Early in the first week the IPA co-sponsored a CSW62 parallel event showcasing success stories of rural women (pictured). In addition, we have supported and attended a number of side and parallel events, sponsored by the various NGO sub-committees of which the IPA is involved.

Zero Draft – Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)

The Zero Draft of the GCM was released on 5 February 2018, at the Commission on the Status of Social Development.

First and second round of negotiations on the GCM

The co-facilitators hosted the first round of intergovernmental negotiations of the GCM, from 20 to 23 February 2018, at the UN’s Trusteeship Council Chamber.

This was an opportunity for delegates to provide their initial positions on the text, providing general statements on the preamble, vision and guiding principles. Member states also gave their detailed feedback on the 22 objectives.

The approach taken in the second round of the negotiations (held from 12 to 15 March 2018) was efficient and effective. Prior to meeting, the co-facilitators provided member states key points to address, as outcomes of the first round of negotiations. The topics were: irregular vs. regular migration, defining terms ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’, proposed implementation and follow up and review.

Over the three days, member states advocated their positions on these topics and responded to enquiries from the co-facilitators. International protection (“IP”) was discussed at length. Some countries, including Australia and China, stated that the term is only applicable to refugees, and we should not be extending its scope to include migrants, stating it will create significant obligations on the member states. They did acknowledge that destination countries could still provide support and
assistance as required. Some countries, for example Turkey and Switzerland, stated that there are minimum human rights that must be protected regardless of status and therefore, terms should be used to reflect this.

All member states agreed that the GCM must make a clear distinction between migrants, particularly migrants in vulnerable situations, and refugees.

A significant talking point was the difficulty faced by the compact to address the gaps for migrants in vulnerable situations. The main gap discussed, was the issue of climate-induced and slow-onset natural disaster displacement, where migrants require certain protections but do not fall within the definition of a refugee. Comoros, as representative of the African group, promoted inclusion of a separate obligation specifically addressing climate-induced displacement in the GCM. This was supported by many member states, and the South Pacific nations were very vocal on this point.

Regarding implementation, and follow up and review, the general consensus was for this to be state led with assistance from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). IOM spoke on the final day of negotiations to confirm they would provide support and include non-government stakeholders, including civil society members, throughout this process.

The co-facilitators and their teams will now take the statements and positions of the member states to amend and further develop the GCM, with the third round of negotiations to commence next week on 3 April 2018.

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