

**On Friday December 7, 2007 Parliamentarians for Global Action held its second roundtable discussion on the issue of migration.**

**Detailed Program Summary of Roundtable Event:**

In attendance were: Members of Parliament (MP), representatives and experts in the fields of demography, law, medicine, policy and social work from UN specialized agencies such as International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labor Organization (ILO), UNDESA's Population Division and Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), UNFPA, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) the Center for Migration Studies (CMS), Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney's Office in New York, New York Presbyterian Hospital (NYP) and the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations.

The meeting opened with formal presentations given by Dip. Gabriel Asencio, MP (Chile); Dip. Jose Ricardo Taveras, MP (Dominican Republic); and Dr. Robert Bristow, Department of Emergency Medicine at NYP and was followed by an open discussion. The open dialogue sought to explore policy solutions to an ambitious set of questions beginning with "Who's Responsible and to What Degree?" in reference to governments and institutions in countries that are sending, receiving or both, in ensuring health access for migrants (for the complete set of questions please refer to the agenda).

Dip. Asencio spoke about Chile's role as a transit and destination country for migrants in neighboring countries, such as Bolivia, Columbia and Ecuador and Chile's regularization policy as a response to the greatest challenge, protecting undocumented workers. Dip. Asencio stated that receiving countries bear the responsibility and that regional action and MERCOSUR involvement in the Latin American context is needed. Action on this issue can include North America and can be applied to regions throughout the globe.

Dip. Jose Ricardo Taveras talked about the influx of migrants from Haiti into the Dominican Republic, their absorption of health care funding and the disfunctions introduced to the DR's health system. Dip. Taveras stated that separate funds are needed to address the Haitian crisis so as to prevent a health system crisis in the DR.

Dr. Bristow spoke from the provider perspective about challenges to the continuity of care and the need for partnerships between health facilities in receiving and sending countries to create a system for follow-up. He also mentioned the utilization of the Emergency Department by undocumented migrants for health care and the operational and financial burden this places on the NYP hospital system. Dr. Bristow described this type of usage as a crisis for New York City hospitals, because of the high concentration of illegal migrants in the area.

During the discussion session, there were many noteworthy remarks given by the participants, some are summarized below:

- CMS Director of Research, Dr. Joseph Chamie talked about the possibility of employing similar protocols and existing technology for screening travelers with highly communicable infectious diseases such as SARS and tuberculosis to ensure that migrants participating in temporary work programs have health coverage for example before entering a host country where applicable. This technology could also track whether migrants have completed a sex education course that covers practicing safe sex, preventing sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.
- NYPVP, Mr. David Liss, acknowledged the need for continuity of care across borders and emphasized the importance of investing in technology to advance this end and to improve public health, adding that patient health information is important for funding, design and implementation of government programs to address population health and access issues. He suggested that elected officials

in communities most affected by migration issues secure local government resources to address them, identifying a need that PGA can address with its members.

- Ms. Masumi Watasi, UNIFEM, posed a question to participants as to which institution is responsible for providing insurance for migrant workers who are participating in a work program.
- Ms. Elena Gastaldo of the ILO commented that the discussion questions present an obligation to confront the differences between legal and illegal immigrants in the human rights and national policy frameworks.
- Ms. Minna Elias, New York Chief of Staff for Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and Ms. Patricia Cortes of UNDESA-DAW, raised the issue of women's reproductive health and the challenges they face as migrant workers, the citizenship of their newborns, the need for prenatal and antenatal care, raising more questions about responsibility for the provision of health services and coverage especially in the context of the citizenship of the child, recognizing that countries have different policies regarding citizenship and birth rights.
- Dr. Henia Dakkak, Technical Specialist of UNFPA's Humanitarian Response Unit stated that information on the cost of access to health care and the effects of lack of access on economies of receiving countries is needed for programs to address the issue of providing health care to people in need who are living in a country illegally.

The diversity of insight at this roundtable brought about new exploration of parameters for protecting human rights and public health for both legal and illegal migrants.