



Roundtable discussions

Refugees and Migration, 19 February 2016

This event was hosted in collaboration with the EU-Delegation. The first speaker was Sergio Carciotto of the Scalabrini Institute, who provided a brief overview of the evolution of migration policy in South Africa, why migration policies fail, and the various immigration and refugee laws. The second speaker, Vuyani Shwane of the Cape Town Refugee Centre, highlighted the opportunities and challenges for organizations working in the field, including threats of violent outbreaks in 2016 and the integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The head of the EU-Delegation to South Africa, Ambassador Marcus Cornaro, pictured below left, attended and commented on issues raised. The Ambassador also mentioned similarities between South Africa and Europe with regard to migrants and asylum seekers.



discussions. The event was well attended by individuals representing sectors of civil and political society and many left with greater clarity on the issue and with the will to create awareness and to educate those with limited knowledge about race and what to do to combat racism.



Back row, L-R: Ms Danielle Hoffmeister (Research Assistant) and Adv Mike Pothier, (Research Coordinator). Front row, L-R: Mr Raymond Perrier, Ms Mary Hames and Mr Andile Magxitama.

The Race Debate: Where to from here? 26 February 2016

On the panel were Andile Mngxitama, former member of the Economic Freedom Fighters and current National Convenor of the Black First, Land First Movement; Mary Hames, the Director of the Gender Equity Unit of the University of the Western Cape; and Raymond Perrier, the Director of the Denis Hurley Centre. The panellists made thought-provoking observations and assertions on the controversial issue of race and racism that left the very diverse audience calling for a series of these



Participant responding to the speakers' presentations.

Stateless Children, 10 March 2016

The South African Learning and Transformation Alliance co-hosted this event. Cleopas Maseko, Director of Thembaletu Nkomazi, and Charlotte Manicom, Advocacy Officer of the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, made presentations. It was clear from these that in terms of the Children's Act and the Bill of Rights in the Constitution, as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, "In all actions concerning the child undertaken by any person or authority the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration. Every child shall have the right from his/her birth to a name...Every child shall have the right to a nationality". However, so many children living in South Africa do not enjoy these rights and are increasingly marginalized. At the present time children without identity documents are being excluded from educational facilities due to a lack of birth certificates or any other proof of identity. Stateless children are unable to obtain such documentation. This effectively means that they are 'nobody' and belong 'nowhere'. It is vitally important to document the incidence of statelessness and to advocate for the recognition of the rights of these children.



L-R: Mr Cleopas Maseko; Ms Charlotte Manicom; and the moderator, Ms Joan Armstrong (Director, Centre for Pastoral Development)

Policy and Legislative Changes with regard to the Amendments to the Refugee Act, 17 March 2016

A collaboration with the Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa (SIHMA). The first topic to be discussed revolved around the National Health Insurance (NHI), which is intended to provide South Africans with comprehensive health insurance irrespective of socioeconomic status, but which excludes refugees and migrants. This exclusion needs to be rectified. The focus then turned towards various issues relating to the Act. The point was made that, since 1997, government has not released a comprehensive policy document on refugees, but has merely amended certain sections of the Act. It was also noted that the situation regarding refugees does not merely affect the Department of Home Affairs, but is inter-related to other departments as well.

The Director of SIHMA, Sergio Carciotto, gave an overview of the background to the major pieces of legislation pertaining to people on the move, as well as the changes made over the years to such legislation. He suggested that we are seeing a paradigm shift from a human rights approach to a security approach, in line with similar legislation in the USA and Europe.

Another common theme in the presentations was that migration is seen as a threat and not an opportunity; this is emphasized by the methods used in dealing with and approving refugee status. We have seen how the number of approved applications is limited to a handful per day, and even these are often only due to bribes 'helping' the applications to be approved. The bureaucratic process involved when approaching the appeal board results in some applicants having to wait for years to hear the outcome of their application. However, there has been some light within all this darkness for refugees with the increase in the development of jurisprudence that upholds refugee rights. The development of a mobile biometric capturing device will also make the process faster and safer.

Some other contested issues, such as the moving of reception offices from major cities to the country's borders, were also discussed. Of concern were some of the changes around definitions of family members, and around asylum seekers' right to work.



L-R: Mr Corey Johnson (Scalabrini Centre, Advocacy Officer), Mr Samson Ogunyemi (Regional Advocacy Officer, Jesuit Refugee Service Southern Africa), Mr Sergio Carciotto (Director, SIHMA) and Fr David Holdcroft (Regional Director, Jesuit Refugee Service Southern Africa)



Attendees partaking in the group work session

The Impact of Climate Change on South African Natural Resources, 18 March 2016



Climate change is affecting land, water, and biodiversity in a variety of ways. Higher temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, increasing extreme events (droughts and floods), and increasing disturbances are occurring across South Africa, with negative effects on already sensitive systems. These kinds of changes, combined with other ongoing stresses, highlight how we need to better our understanding of how climate change may affect landscapes, ecosystems, ecosystem services, and local economies now and in the future. While managing ecosystems and resources by relying on an expected set of climate conditions may have worked in the past, a growing number of experts understand the need to develop new ways to manage ecosystems in the face of climate change. Speaking at the event were Ms Zuziwe Jonas, Mr Floid Chauke, Mr Obed Phahlane and Dr Amos Madhlopa.

Other Events & Visitors

Mensen met een Missie visit to the CPLO, 18 January 2016

A delegation of supporters, a few of them pictured, of the Dutch Catholic organisation, Mensen met een Missie (MM), visited the CPLO on 18th January. The visit was part of MM's programme exposing its supporters and members to the work of its various partners in South Africa. CPLO staff provided an overview of the important issues in their research areas, and Fr Peter-John Pearson, CPLO Director, briefed the visitors on the role of CPLO, and the Church, in helping civil society to build and consolidate democracy in South Africa.



Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act Commemoration Mass, 1 February 2016

Approximately 100 people attended the Mass to mark the 20th anniversary of the passage of the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act in St. Mary's Cathedral Cape Town. Over the past year, it is estimated that 89,000 abortions took place legally in South Africa. Although no reliable figures exist, it is thought that the number of backstreet abortions is on the increase. In his sermon, Fr Peter-John pointed to the figure of David in the reading for the day, who despite the call of several voices refused to be swayed from his course. He urged those who value life to be equally resolute in following their call and not to be dissuaded by the 'voices of the age'.



Fr Peter-John in St Mary's Cathedral



The congregation during the commemoration Mass

Meeting with Ambassador Dangor, 12 February 2016

Ambassador Mohamed Dangor, former South African ambassador to Libya, Syria and Saudi Arabia, met with Archbishop Stephen Brislin, President of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, and Fr Peter-John to be briefed about their recent visit to Palestine and Jordan. They spoke particularly about the situation in Gaza. Ambassador Dangor is at present the special envoy of the President to the Middle East. He has vast experience in that region. He also shared some of his insights with the CPLO staff who met for tea afterwards. He outlined some of the values that underlined South Africa's foreign policy and some of the constraints that had to be taken into account when engaging foreign countries. He spoke of South Africa's desire to work with multi-lateral organisations and the emphasis South Africa puts on dialogue as a means of resolving problems.



CPLO Staff with Ambassador Dangor (seated on the right).



L-R: Ambassador Dangor and Archbishop Brislin

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