

## UNEPS/GAPW Regional Capacity Building

*Hosted by: Hussein Solomon at the University of Pretoria*

*Sponsored by: Simons Foundation*

Thanks in part to the generosity of the Simons Foundation; Global Action was able to undertake a capacity building program in South Africa (April-May) in part to bring together UNEPS partners who were not able to come to Brisbane for the GAPW/UNEPS international meeting in February. The trip also provided opportunities to meet with African NGO and religious leaders through diverse venues, including regional meetings focused on faith-based communities and human rights and The Responsibility to Protect.

### UNEPS Workshop

The UNEPS meeting/workshop with partners from South Africa, Cameroon and Mozambique was a good success. Students, academics, NGO leaders and representatives of UN agencies -- gathered in a conference room at the University of Pretoria (at the Centre for International Political Studies) for a vigorous discussion of the merits and challenges of a UNEPS in African contexts.

The point was made strongly by the panelists – Hussein Solomon (who hosted the event), Alejandro Soto Romero, Christian Tanyi and Bob Zuber – that UNEPS is being designed and promoted as a service-integrated, complementary capacity that would work alongside existing UN and regional peacekeeping operations. This discussion underscored two important mandates for UNEPS. First, that the non-military components of UNEPS, including police, health and development assistance, must receive the same levels of strategic attention as the military components. And second, that a UNEPS must continue to seek a complementary ‘fit’ both with the constellation of existing regional and UN peacekeeping operations and with the articulated security needs and concerns of nations in the ‘global south’ that would most likely be the recipients of any future UNEPS deployment.



Panel: Christian Tanyi, Hussein Solomon, Robert Zuber and Alejandro Soto Romero



Christian Tanyi (Cameroon) 1

The issues posed by workshop participants in response to the panelists were familiar ones. Some questioned the political viability of such a proposal. Others questioned the viability of the UN system and its ability to build reliable, attentive and trustworthy collective security arrangements. Some of the younger participants in the workshop seemed particularly pleased that a proposal was being developed that was not 'business as usual' and that represented sincere and strategic efforts to address genocidal and other severe forms of violence in their formative stages.

### **Notable Events**

As already noted, there were two other major opportunities to communicate core GAPW/UNEPS objectives while building networks with community, policy and religious leaders from across the continent. First, Hussein Solomon at the University of Pretoria organized a conference of faith leaders from diverse African countries interested in exploring and expanding their commitment to human rights protection. Both Hussein and Bob had pivotal roles to play in determining a final list of outcomes/recommendations from the group that was sent to the African Union and will be used to form the basis for follow-up meetings next year in Ethiopia.

The other meeting of note, held at a conference centre outside of Johannesburg, was organized by Sapna Chatpar and Bill Pace of the World Federalist Movement on the 'Responsibility to Protect.' This event brought together representatives from a number of southern African countries to discuss how the evolving norm of 'R2P' can be used to address genocide and other complex humanitarian emergencies in the region. UNEPS was noted as a positive 'tool' for the implementation of R2P, though many R2P leaders remain reluctant to endorse specific implementation strategies at this time, despite the urging of many 'global south' NGOs, including some of those represented at this particular gathering, to do so.

Over the course of the month, it became clear that African NGOs generally possess more wisdom, skill and enthusiasm than capacity. The leadership of many of these groups is young, smart, committed and entrepreneurial. However, these leaders are often under great pressures emanating from the needs of local constituents, regional political and social challenges, and chronic financial shortfalls. Helping local and regional NGOs in diverse global regions address these capacity gaps must become a higher-profile part of our obligation to present and future partners.

One of the reasons why GAPW has pushed to establish (and to grow) the Wallach Fund for the Eradication of Genocide is out of the recognition of this need to provide this kind of capacity assistance – including on-site support -- to help ensure the attentiveness and effectiveness of our global south partners. We cannot reasonably ask these organizations to work alongside us on UNEPS, 1325, conventional weapons or any other program unless we are willing to invest more of our own time, resources and talent to help ensure that partners have what they need to operate more effectively and sustainably.

We look forward to working together as demands grow for regional meetings, consultations and materials focused on UNEPS and related GAPW priorities.