

GAAMAC II Outcome Document
4 February 2016
Manila, Philippines

Context:

The Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes (GAAMAC) emerged in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania in March 2013 as a joint initiative of states and civil society active in the fields relevant to the prevention of genocide and other mass atrocities and the responsibility to protect. The first International GAAMAC Meeting took place in San José, Costa Rica in March 2014, with more than 120 representatives from 52 states and civil society organizations. Due to the recognition of the need for and benefit of this interaction, participants recommended that a second meeting should be organized.

Following the first meeting, interested Member States¹ and representatives of non-governmental organizations² created a working group with the participation of the UN Office of the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and R2P. The working group constituted itself as the Steering Group that produced the Founding Document in 2015 as requested by the first GAAMAC meeting, further defining the visions and goals of GAAMAC, and organized the second International Meeting – GAAMAC II – aimed at strengthening national architectures for the prevention of atrocity crimes.

GAAMAC II:

GAAMAC II was held in Manila, Philippines from 2 to 4 February 2016. The objective of GAAMAC II was to convene interested governments, regional organizations, NGOs, and relevant UN offices to discuss and identify the challenges and opportunities of developing national architectures on atrocity prevention and to strengthen the capacities and strategies of states, international bodies and non-governmental organizations in this field. The Governments of the Philippines and Switzerland jointly took the leadership of organizing this meeting, with the mandate and support from the GAAMAC Steering Group.

GAAMAC II convened more than 200 individuals, including delegates from 54 states, of which 37 were represented by the headquarters, and more than 50 non-governmental organizations and 10 international bodies.

¹ Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Switzerland and Tanzania.

² Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, Global Centre for R2P, International Coalition for RtoP, FXB Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University, School of Diplomacy and International Relations at Seton Hall University, and the Stanley Foundation.

The meeting was opened by speeches from Mr. Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General; Mr. Rafael Seguis, Undersecretary of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Didier Burkhalter, Minister of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Jesus R. S. Domingo, Assistant Secretary of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs; Ms. M^o Bleeker, GAAMAC Chair; Mr. Adama Dieng, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide; and Mr. Jose Ramos-Horta, Former President of Timor-Leste and Nobel Prize Laureate.

As a community of practice and commitment, GAAMAC II invited the participants to delve into practical questions such as: what are successful national atrocity prevention policies and architectures? What are the constituent parts of such mechanisms and policies? How can regional, national and civil society engagement strengthen national architectures? The interactive and participatory methodology allowed intensive peer-to-peer exchange of ideas, experiences, and exemplary practices throughout plenary and group sessions. During the group sessions the same three common questions were addressed: what are the ongoing challenges when building national architectures today? What lessons have emerged? What are the contributions that GAAMAC could potentially provide to the atrocity prevention community in concert with and to complement existing initiatives and networks?

The interactive and inclusive design of this meeting allowed the “big tent” philosophy of GAAMAC to become a reality: the richness of diverse experiences shared by state and civil society representatives made it possible for the participants to share a number of concrete examples of atrocity prevention initiatives, policies and programmes from local to national to regional levels. Through personal interactions, the participants had direct access to experts and practitioners in the field, allowing them to explore synergies and gain knowledge from real situations. GAAMAC II thus fostered a trustful environment in which participants engaged actively in self-reflective, honest, and constructive dialogue.

Discussions across the plenaries and group sessions were genuinely seeking cross-fertilization of valuable experiences, which, in turn, encouraged the participants to assume more proactive responsibility for their actions and ownership of their ideas. Self-organized groups emerged, sharing their interest to address common problems.

These peer-to-peer interactions helped identify the most pressing concerns, challenges and opportunities for atrocity prevention and for building national capacities from the participants’ perspectives. At the same time, these needs-based discussions generated ideas and initiatives to be developed with the view to strengthen efforts in relevant areas, including, to name only a few:

- Data gathering and data verification systems to detect instances of mass violence, and identify their patterns;
- Regional, cross-cutting partnerships on information sharing and capacity building, such as in Latin America and the Great Lakes Region in Africa;

- Making information and technology tools accessible for atrocity prevention at the local, community level;
- Compiling good practices on, for example, countering hate speech, promoting inclusivity, and the use of social media;
- Developing tolerance/atrocity prevention education curricula;
- Advocacy and dissemination of gender-relevant issues in atrocity prevention;
- Generating a resource tool on how to develop national architecture and policy.

The participants concurred that GAAMAC has great potential to raise awareness, support policy formulation, and strengthen capacity. Participants at GAAMAC II have shown the interest and potential to self-organize to take on the challenges of subjects important to them. This can be done through information sharing on the website, via the establishment of working groups, and through specific activities that may be undertaken at the request of states and other stakeholders as GAAMAC moves ahead.

Ways Forward:

Given the numerous recommendations arising from the plenaries and the 15 group sessions, as well as the need to support and systematize the work at national, sub-regional, and regional levels, the Steering Group has committed to drafting a full report containing key elements of the discussions and recommendations. The report will be available on the website www.gaamac.org in the coming months.

It was also noted that some states and organizations are interested in joining GAAMAC as partners and others in taking more active roles in GAAMAC. Acknowledging that the Steering Group should represent different regions of the world and a diversity of experience, it will be open to new members and will adjust its size to meet these criteria while at the same time maintaining efficiency.

Communication to GAAMAC can be done through contact@gaamac.org.

This Outcome Document will be shared at the concluding session of GAAMAC II. Comments and suggestions to be considered for inclusion in this Outcome Document can be sent to saskia.weidmann@eda.admin.ch before 18 March 2016.