

Communiqué of the 5th Global Assembly of the International Migrants Alliance
Bangkok, Thailand
30 November to 3 December 2022

IN OUR COLLECTIVE UNITY, THERE IS STRENGTH, HOPE AND VICTORY!

This is the message coming out of the 5th Global Assembly (5GA) of the International Migrants Alliance (IMA) that was successfully held in Bangkok, Thailand last November 30 to December 3, 2022.

The 5th Global Assembly, the highest policy and decision-making body of the IMA, gathered the biggest attendance of migrants and advocates since the alliance's founding in 2008, with 154 participants representing 109 national, regional and global organizations from 27 countries and country regions worldwide.

With the theme, *“Strengthen our ranks, and expand our movement! Unite with workers and the oppressed and exploited people to confront the crisis and fight imperialism! Build a new system without forced migration and commodification of migrants!”*, the 5GA participants through the panel discussions and talk shows shared with one another experiences, insights and analyses on the current situation of the COVID pandemic and the multiple crises they are confronted with and continuing to overcome as well strategies in organizing migrants and refugees on the ground, building unity with workers and other sectors, and launching and winning more campaigns. Several side events were also organized by IMA member and friend organizations.

Likewise, the organizational discussions of the IMA 5GA saw the welcoming of new members, approval of the chairperson and treasurer's reports, the IMA Constitution's amendments and the General Program of Action for the next three (3) years, and the election of the new set of International Coordinating Body (ICB).

Truly, the IMA's 5GA was momentous with migrant leaders and advocates committing to building a stronger global movement of migrants, refugees and displaced peoples.

In unison we shout: Struggle! Resist!

The IMA's 5th Global Assembly began with a prayer led by Catalina Lopez of Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Accion Psicosocial from Guatemala, recounting the sufferings and struggles of migrants and refugees, remembering those who have died due to COVID and other diseases, while in transit, or from injustice, and reminding us to strengthen our resolve to continue and fight.

It was followed by a powerful video on what the sector has gone through in the past four (4) years, highlighting the mutual help among migrants, host peoples and advocates, the many campaigns we have launched and won, and the importance of linking our struggles with the struggles of our people back in our home countries.

Antonio Arizaga of the Frente Unido de Inmigrante de Inmigrantes Ecuatorianos (FUIE) and Misun Woo of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) officially welcomed the participants to the 5GA.

Arizaga, chairperson of FUIE as well as then incumbent vice chairperson of the IMA, stated in his speech the importance of the 5th Global Assembly amidst the multiple crises that grip both the migrants and the people of the world. He pointed out that *“only international struggle and solidarity will be the guarantee”* to achieve a world founded on justice, peace and liberation.

Woo, regional coordinator of the Thailand-based feminist platform APWLD, described the growing movement of migrants, refugees and displaced peoples as authors of resilience, planters and restorers of life among themselves, their families and the greater community, a testament of love, and a journey of hope. She hoped that the migrant movement ignite hope for the greater movement of people all over the world.

A beautiful performance of a traditional Thai dance was rendered by Voice of Peace, a Thailand-based cultural group composed mainly of Thai youth.

Strong, powerful messages were then shared by the 5GA's keynote speakers Azra Sayeed, Camilo Perez-Bustillo, and Robert Reid.

Azra Sayeed, executive director of Roots for equity and chairperson of the anti-imperialist International Women's Alliance, impressed the importance of all workers, including migrant workers, to be at the front row of fighters against the monster that is neoliberalism. She stated that it important for all migrants to understand imperialism that we are fighting against, how it has grown through the years, and how it has caused the multiple crises – economic, climate, environmental, political and health. She likewise stated that we only have ourselves, not technology, to rely on. "Never believe that technology will help us win the war; it always fails, it is up to us."

Camilo Perez-Bustillo of National Lawyer's Guild-San Francisco Bay Area, Witness at the Border and the International Tribunal of Conscience of Peoples in Movement, highlighted the importance of migrants' struggles and victories in waging more campaigns and organizing more migrants and people. He pointed out that there is "no reason to assume that law equals justice. In fact, the contrary is often true (unjust laws). [It is] our task as progressive lawyers, human rights defenders and legal workers to bring legality and legitimacy into align with each other as we build indigenous resistance against colonialism, conquest, assimilation, and slavery."

Robert Reid, president of FIRST Union, Aotearoa-New Zealand's largest union in oil, gas and chemical related industries, focused his keynote on the resistance of workers. In his speech, Reid pointed out that it was imperialism that developed semi-feudal and semi-colonial societies, countries that have become the source and peddlers of cheap migrant labor and how it has ingrained neo-fascist, racist and anti-migrant sentiments among local unions in migrant-host countries. Amidst this, he stated that it is imperative for migrant workers to organize themselves in host countries and that local unions should do their utmost to include and enjoin migrant workers. To do this, he stated that we need to: (a) give greater protection to migrant workers, (b) help local workers understand that migrant workers are workers like them, and (c) build solidarity and understanding between local and migrant workers. He impressed that it is in "combining our resistance with achieving palpable results for workers, including migrant workers, that will win them to our side and build the solidarity between the workers of all countries. With this, he closed by saying, "The road may be long and torturous, but the future is bright."

United in One Stand, Firm and Resolute

In the first two days of the 5GA, participants actively engaged in a series of panel discussions and talk shows.

The first panel discussion focused on the economic struggles of migrant workers and their families in both sending and home countries, the rise of precarious and informal employment of migrants, and the importance of service organizations and advocates in movement-building.

The second panel discussion centred on social and political issues, particularly the imperialist wars and aggression as causes of the refugee crises and forced displacement, racism and xenophobia, fascism, state repression and border control, as well as climate change and displacement.

The struggle of women in migration was the main topic of the third panel discussion as speakers delved into topics of patriarchy and migration policies, demystifying “feminization of migration”, and the challenges to organizing women migrants.

The fourth and fifth panel discussions looked into emerging issues and concerns, such as comprehensive issues and work among migrant youth, unionisation of migrants, the plight of migrant agricultural workers, the ongoing struggle of refugees and asylum seekers, and seafarers.

Two talk shows were also introduced, providing migrant and advocate speakers to share lessons and experiences in launching anti-imperialist as well as migrant-solidarity campaigns, homefront campaigns and the importance of participation from overseas migrants, and the need to strengthen cooperation of migrants with the working class and people’s organizations in host countries.

Regional meetings were also conducted to discuss the issues confronting the sectors as well as campaigns that can be developed in the region. These meetings gathered member organisations of the IMA with observer organisations being invited to participate as well. Each region shared their reports on Day 3.

Several side events were also organized by IMA member and friend organizations in the evening, with topics on the importance of supporting the campaigns of sea-based migrant workers and their organizing, sharing of experiences among migrant organizations in terms of their organizing, conducting campaigns and building solidarity, the relevance of international conventions and frameworks like the Global Compact for Migration in the migrants’ struggles.

United in One Stand, Firm and Resolute

Days 3 and 4 of the IMA 5GA saw the conduct of the alliance’s organizational discussions, with the attendance of 65 regular and 24 associate member organizations. Of this number, 10 regular and 2 associate member organizations authorized 5GA participants to represent them during the assembly.

Prior to the organizational discussions, IMA 5GA participants gathered in regional meetings to discuss and consolidate their ongoing campaigns, share strategies in strengthening IMA in their respective areas, and select a representative to become part of the International Coordinating Body, the highest policy making body of the IMA in between global assemblies. The various regions of the IMA – Africa and the Middle East, Asia Pacific, Canada, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and USA – then reported to the body on the third day.

The organizational discussions began with the acceptance and welcoming of the alliance’s new members. A total of 32 organizations joined the IMA, namely: Alianza Migrante (Ecuador), Asociación Civil de Derechos Humanos Mujeres Unidas Migrantes y Refugiadas en Argentina (AMUMRA, Argentina), Anakbayan Portland (USA), Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) (Regional, Philippines-based), Beranda Perempuan (Indonesia), Better Engagement Between East and Southeast Asia (BEBESEA) (Cross-regional, Indonesia-based), Capiybara Colectiva (USA), Centre for Migrant Workers' Concerns (CMWC, Australia), Colectivo de inmigrantes indígenas Ecuatorianos en Brasil (Brazil), Comité d’Action des Personnes Sans Statuts (CAPSS, Canada), Concerned Seafarers of the Philippines (Philippines), Coordinadora Nacional de Inmigrante Chile (Chile), Coxsbazar Probashi Forum (Bangladesh), Familias Unidas Por La Justicia (USA), Filipino Bayanihan Center (USA), Filipino Parents Association of Quebec (Canada), Fundacion Red Ecuatoriana de Desarrollo Eco Social (FUNREDES, The Ecuadorian Network Foundation for Eco Social Development), Ecuador, Ganas Community (Taiwan), Himigrante Thailand (Thailand), Liga Pekerja Migran Indonesia (LIPMI, Hong Kong), Migrant Action Trust (Aotearoa-New Zealand), Migrant Collective (USA), Migrante Philippines (Philippines), Migrante Quebec (Canada), Migrants Resource Centre Canada (Canada), MOVERS Indonesia (Hong Kong), Ovibashi Karmi Kallyan Foundation (OKKAF, Bangladesh), Pacific Coast Coalition for Seafarers (PCCS, USA), Samahan ng mga DH ng Gitnang Silangan (SANDIGAN, Philippines), South Texas Human Rights Centre (USA), Super Familia (USA) and The

Alberta Workers' Association for Research and Education (AWARE, Canada). Of the 32 new members, 21 organizations are regular members.

The Assembly unanimously approved the reports of the various global regions, the reports from the Chairperson and Treasurer, amendments to the IMA's Constitution and Bylaws, and the General Program of Action which will guide the IMA and its members on campaigns, education and awareness-raising, organizing and solidarity from 2022 to 2025. The limitation in time, however, did not see the deliberation and approval of resolutions.

To lead the IMA, the new set of ICB members was elected. They are the following: Fajar Santoadi of TENAGANITA, Lina Cahuasqui of Alianza Migrante, Luz Miriam Jaramillo of Comitato Immigrati in Italia, Mark Louie Aquino of Migrante UAE, Terrence Valen of Bay Area Seafarers Coalition, and Viviana Medina of Immigrant Workers Centre (who were selected by their respective regions); Adrienne Sebastian of Migrante Portland, Antonio Arizaga of Frente Unidos Inmigrantes Ecuatorianos, Eni Lestari of Asian Migrants Coordinating Body, Joanna Concepcion of Migrante International, Mandeep Singh Bela of Union Network of Migrants, Manuel Hidalgo of Coordinadora Nacional de Inmigrante Chile, Marco Luciano of Migrante Alberta, and Rey Asis of Likha Filipino Migrant Cultural Organization (elected at large); Antonia Lilli of Union Network of Migrants and Eunice de Asis of Migrante Amsterdam (alternate members); and Anisur Khan of IMA Research Foundation and Malick Sy of Confederation Nationale des Travailleurs du Senegal (selected to represent associate members).

The ICB elected amongst themselves the new composition of the Executive Committee: Eni Lestari as chairperson, Antonio Arizaga as vice chairperson, Joanna Concepcion as secretary general, Manuel Hidalgo as deputy secretary general, and Terrence Valen as treasurer.

The IMA 5GA was concluded with a solidarity afternoon of cultural performances, sharing of situations and solidarity, and community dancing, chanting and singing by all members.

Onwards we shall move

The IMA 5GA was a resounding success with members of the alliance reaffirming their commitment to actively and aggressively raising awareness of, organizing and mobilizing their fellow migrants, refugees, displaced peoples while forging stronger unity and solidarity with advocates, workers and other sectors.

As they continue to speak for themselves, the IMA members will continue to empower their fellow migrants, refugees and displaced peoples so that with one united voice and as part of a greater movement of people, they can build a better world where all families are united and not separated by the need to survive, all are equal, and migration is truly a right.