

**GROUP OF 78  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
REPORT TO MEMBERS, 2013-14  
OTTAWA, SEPTEMBER 2014**

**INTRODUCTION**

This report from the Group of 78 Board of Directors to its membership accounts for the activities and operations of the organization in the past year, 2013-14. Overall, we have had a good year, particularly in terms of the content of the events we have held and in improving communications with members and the wider community. The following information provides an overview and details of our year's activities.

**GOVERNANCE**

The Board of Directors met immediately after the 2013 annual meeting, elected its officers and identified priorities for action. It met as usual in March 2014 for its mid-point session to review programs and issues. Its final meeting was held just before this year's annual meeting.

The Board Officers for the year have been:

Richard Harmston, Chair  
Manfred Bienefeld, Vice Chair  
Peggy Mason, Past Chair & Secretary  
Joan Broughton, Treasurer

Three other Directors joined the Officers to form the Executive Committee: Gerald Ohlsen, Roy Culpeper and Erica Noordermeer. The EC met at least once a month, sometimes more as needs dictated, to manage the programs and operations of the organization. The Executive Committee serves as the management team for the Group of 78, accountable to the full Board of Directors.

Following the work done last year and key decisions taken at the previous annual meeting in 2013, the Group filed its application in October 2013 for legal continuance as required by the new Not for Profit law for all such organizations. Our application was found in order and the Government granted "continuance" as a duly incorporated organization to the Group of 78. Our new by-laws, revised at the last AGM, took effect.

**PROGRAMS**

**Luncheons**

The Group continued to explore a wide range of international and foreign policy issues in our ongoing luncheon series, held in eight of the 12 months of the year. This year's line-up included:

- Michel de Salaberry: *The Case of the Disappearing Centre in Egyptian (and other) Politics*, October 2013
- Michael Byers: *From Sea Kings to F35s: What's wrong with Canadian military procurement?*, November 2013
- John Curtis: *Bali & Beyond: The Future of the World Trading System*, January 2014
- John McNee: *Pluralism: A Pressing Global Challenge*, February 2014
- Mike Perry: *"Not for Sale": Slavery & Human Trafficking in Canada & Around the World*, March 2014
- Errol Mendes: *Redefining State Sovereignty: Historical Flaws & Contemporary Crises*, April 2014
- John Trent: *Some Directions for an Alternative Canadian Foreign Policy*, May 2014
- John Stone: *Climate Change: From Science to Policy*, June 2014

### **Afghanistan Project: Pathways to Peace**

The Group continues to support the Afghanistan: Pathways to Peace network, whose activities have been constrained by the current financial challenges face by all CSOs. During the past year, there has been great interest in the role of women in the peace process. Pathways is developing projects with Afghan partners that reflect this trend, highlighted by the campaign that lead early this year to the *Afghan Women's Call for Peace and Ceasefire*, signed by more than a quarter million Afghan Women. Two partner organizations, the Women Activities and Social Services Association (WASSA), based in Heart, and the Research Institute for Women, Peace and Security (RIWPS) based in Kabul, have extensive experience in organizing and facilitating peace dialogues among Afghan women in different parts of the country. Pathways is developing project proposals with both organizations that will be presented both to donors and the international public for funding.

Over the year, Pathways has initiated several events in Canada and continued to network extensively with its international partners. It is participating in an initiative of the Atlantic Council of Canada to establish a working group that will seek to keep Afghanistan on the international agenda and to advise government on next steps. The network is establishing a newsletter that will keep members informed of developments in a timely manner. On September 29, Pathways, in association with the Rideau Institute, will make a presentation entitled *In Pursuit of an Afghan Peace: Women, Civil Society and Blue Helmets*. Part of the annual Ottawa Peace Festival, the event will be at noon in the Auditorium of the Ottawa Public Library.

### **Issue of Land Grabs in Africa**

On February 25, a roundtable event was held at 1 Wellington St. on Parliament Hill, featuring the Coalition for Equitable Land Acquisitions and Development in Africa (CELADA). The Group of 78 was a co-sponsor of the event along with Oxfam Canada. Presentations were made by Obang Metho and Maggy Razafimbahiny of CELADA, and by Robert Fox of Oxfam Canada. The aim of the roundtable was to increase awareness of land-grabs in Africa (as well as other developing countries) and to urge parliamentarians to consider actions aimed at avoiding forced

evictions by farmers from their lands. About 60 people attended, including some MPs, their staff, members of the NGO community, academics, and students.

## **Advocacy**

Following each policy conference, the Group of 78 shares the report of the event, particularly the conclusions and recommendations, with government ministers, senior policy makes and other Parliamentarians, as well as with a swath of civil society engaged in international issues. The results of our 2013 conference on *Responding to China's Global Re-emergence* were similarly distributed to politicians, officials and others.

## **Follow-up to 2013 Annual Conference**

Several members of the Group of 78 accepted an invitation to participate in a China Forum organized at Carleton University, Ottawa, immediately following our policy conference on China. The Forum included several speakers from China who had participated in our conference. The Forum is now an annual event and seeks to build better understanding of the challenges facing China and the world as that country seeks to integrate its powerful and dynamic economy into an unbalanced and fragile global situation.

## **Conference 2014**

The 2014 annual policy conference was perhaps the most ambitious event that the Group of 78 has organized. Taking off from the centennial of the First World War and concerned that other efforts might focus on the militaristic and glorification of Canada's engagement, the Board decided to entitle the event *World War I and Contemporary Issues on War & Peace*. Combining the views of historians and commentators on current perspectives, the conference's aim was to draw lessons for future policy making for peace. The Group partnered with Project Ploughshares to organize the event and generated support from the Canadian War Museum, as well as the embassies of the United States, Austria and Germany. PeaceQuest and other organizations contributed.

## **OPERATIONS**

### **Membership**

The G78 membership remained stable during the year. The few losses have been offset by new people recruited. Expanding such recruitment remains a challenge for the organization.

### **Financial Status**

The core and most important factor in the finances of the Group continues to be its members who, through their fees and special contributions, ensure its operations and underpin its programming. G78 aims to have its program events break even on their direct expenses. Fundraising, whether from government or the private sector, remains elusive for many civil

society organizations. The Group is grateful, however, for support received from partner and sponsoring entities for its conference.

## **Website**

This year the Group launched its new website. After more than a year in the works of arranging funds and designing the new site, it was unveiled in April 2014. It has a much more attractive look, is easier to navigate and is able to hold far more information for its members and other visitors. It also provides for members to engage in dialogue on chosen issues by submitting comments and reacting to others. Useful analysis from other sources is also being added to the site. Thanks go to Peter Moore, our webmaster in recent years, for his site engineering, and to Erica Noordmeer and Mary Edwards for their shepherding the process.

## **Secretariat**

Mary Edwards has anchored our operations and activities in the G78 office for the past 12 years and will soon take a well-deserved retirement. The Board and membership are extremely grateful for her service and salute her long contribution to the organization. We wish her well as she turns attention to other activities while continuing her role as a member of the Group.

Just before last year's annual meeting, the Group learned that the landlord at 145 Spruce Street wanted the full space cleared for other plans. After some fast surveying, G78 found new space and moved into 244 – 211 Bronson Avenue, Ottawa, in October 2014. It has the advantage of more room for Secretariat operations.

## **CONCLUSION**

As the program year closes, the international scene has entered a more troubled phase. The Middle East houses various conflicts: Israel-Palestine, civil war of Syria, rising conflict in Iraq, and the rise of the virulent Islamic State. Just to the north is potential disintegration of Ukraine, serving to create the biggest regional crisis in Europe since the fall of the Wall. In Africa we see the spread of a new and deadly epidemic with global implications. As a backdrop to all of this is shifting tectonics of global power in the rise of China and the West's continuing predisposition to intervene militarily in crisis situations, producing worse outcomes and fueling extremism. The international architecture, centred in the United Nations, is under great strain because of all these and other issues. The international community's response to the challenges is wanting. Many in Canada find our country increasingly part of the problem, rather than the solution. The Group of 78 will continue to provide space for insight and dialogue on such questions and to generate views toward their solution. We shall work where possible in concert with other civil society organizations to broaden our reach to the Canadian public and to enhance the voices for a progressive role by Canada in international affairs.