

Purpose, Processes and Activities

November 2013

Vision, Goals and Objectives

Our **Vision** is to contribute to the creation and maintenance of inclusive, safe, healthy and sustainable human settlements through a collaboration of the international planning profession.

Our **Goals** are to mobilise and share knowledge and learn from each other's experiences; build the capacity of the planning community; and promote and provide international advocacy for planning.

Our **Objectives** are to develop and share a global planning knowledge base; further develop the world's capacity for and understanding of planning; define the concepts of sustainability and sustainable human settlements; promote human equity and empowerment in planning; and engage new partners committed to the values of the Vancouver Declaration and the work of GPN.

GPN Structure and Operation

The GPN is intended to be a non-institutional body with limited administration. In this way it does not seek to replace or duplicate the roles and purpose of national planning associations or other representative associations, but rather garner ideas and information to help shape consensus views and engage in activities that will leverage off this experience for the benefit of international planning awareness, learning, development, support and standing up for planning.

On this basis, whilst the membership on occasion needs to make decisions principally of an operational nature, the bulk of its focus is on activities that will benefit current and potential participants.

Its activities centre around the conduct of the Network, the existence of which is essentially virtual, although on occasion our members do have the opportunity to meet at various events around the world.

In order to coordinate its activities, the GPN convenes periodic teleconferences of interested members. The Steering Group comprises as a minimum those organisations undertaking key tasks for the GPN and at least one representative of smaller organisations. The hosting of the Steering Group rotates and is intended to encourage engagement with any member who shares an interest in its activities.

It is necessary on occasion for the Steering Group to discuss and make decisions as to how its activities are conducted, which is not only part of good governance but necessary if promotion of the aims of the GPN is to be advanced. The decision making process is promoted in an open and inclusive forum, with consensus outcomes.

Those who share the vision, objectives and goals of the GPN are welcome to participate as members at no charge and in whatever capacity they are able to, in order to help advance the activities of the Network.

This membership is comprised of two types, the first of which are the recognised planning associations of nations that have signed up to the 2006 Vancouver Declaration and are committed to contributing time and effort to implementing the actions of the GPN. These are known as signatories.

The second are those organisations who have an interest in planning and do not represent the planning profession at a national level, but may still be able to make a contribution to achieving planning outcomes that are consistent with the objectives, goals and actions of the GPN. These are known as supporters.

The Steering Group may consider requests from recognised international planning organisations to join at, or transfer to, signatory status.

GPN Activities and Support

A Common Voice for Planning

The GPN is committed to *Joining Voices... Joining Forces... Taking Action.*

The GPN is a plurality of voices with diverse and relevant experience to advocate for effective planning. As a Network the GPN is able to:

- articulate planning issues as they present themselves in different contexts in various parts of the world;
- raise issues faced by national planning organisations to a global scale;
- promote and champion shared values about “good” planning and deliver universal planning messages to national governments and international agencies;
- operate a knowledge sharing platform and disseminate lessons and case studies
- enable organisations within their own countries or regions, and in different circumstances, to have access to the ideas, experiences and information of others to assist them in their advocacy for planning; and
- focus strongly on communication strategies and methods to promote these activities.

Since its inception in 2006, the GPN has used its collective voice at a host of international forums, through material it has produced and major statements it has made at its biennial meetings, starting with the Vancouver Declaration to which most members are signatories.

Vancouver Declaration, 2006

The Vancouver Declaration recognised the switch from a rural to an urban majority in the world population and highlighted the rapid increase in urbanisation, slum development and urban poverty. Planning professionals raised a new voice to support the UN Habitat Action Programme for Human Settlements by reshaping planning skills, processes and policies locally, nationally and globally to tackle the challenges of urbanisation.

The core principles of the Vancouver Declaration assert that there can be no sustainable development without sustainable urbanization and there can be no sustainable urbanization without effective planning. They recognised that political will and targeted investment are required for effective planning and that both urban and rural development must be more sustainable to realise the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Zhenjiang Communiqué, 2008

“Building on the 2006 Vancouver Declaration, the GPN steers towards harmonious settlements, places in harmony with nature and places where there is harmony between people. We champion planning as a strategic, integrative, inclusive and pro-poor process. As a tool for urban development and environmental management, effective planning alleviates poverty, reduces inequality, slows down slum formation, mitigates hazards and builds safe, inclusive settlements.”

“We leave Zhenjiang renewing our commitment to increase the global capacity to plan and manage settlements in timely, affordable and harmonious ways. We will continue to bring planners together

to strengthen their links with communities, professionals, politicians and civil society to enhance the quality and future resilience of human settlements.”

Montreal Communiqué, 2010

The GPN noted that the scientific evidence clearly indicates that the degradation of the environment brought about by climate change and human activities is having a profound impact on biophysical, social and economic systems. It also noted that human settlements are a particular focus for attention as urban areas contribute up to 70% of greenhouse gases. There can be no doubt that human settlements need to be at the centre of adaptation and mitigation strategies.

In particular the GPN asserts that there is a need:

- for collective action to address the causes of climate change and to prepare for its consequences;
- to restore and sustain natural ecosystems;
- to commit to strategies that aim to achieve sustainable urbanism in the longer-term; and
- for effective planning, based on the principles that underpin the Vancouver Declaration to secure a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations.

Naples Declaration 2012

The Global Planners Network confirms its founding principles to promote strategic, inclusive and integrative planning at all scales and to fulfil its responsibilities to present and future generations. We will continue to work together, and with others, to tackle rapid urbanization and urban poverty, adopt a more integrated approach to planning urban and rural areas, protect ecosystems and combat natural hazards resulting from climate change.

The Global Planners Network dedicates itself to support this Declaration now, and in the future, by:

- building the capacity for effective planning both globally and locally by increasing education and research;
- narrowing the gap between the rate of urbanisation and our capacity to plan and manage development; and
- linking with other professionals, politicians and institutions involved in the future of human settlements.

Other Activities

The GPN supports the members in the network (and by extension their respective memberships) through a few key activities and methods. These include:

- the maintenance of the GPN website by the APA
- the production of a newsletter by the RTPPI
- dissemination of GPN news and conferences through the national newsletters and the websites of the signatory organisations (as resources allow)
- revolving host of the GPN Biennial Congress by the signatory organisations (2006 – Vancouver; 2008 – APA); 2010 – CIP; 2012 – APA; 2014 – PIA)
- coordination of a GPN presence at the biennial UNHabitat World Urban Forum (2006 in Vancouver, Canada; 2008 in Nanjing, China; 2010 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; 2012 in Naples, Italy; 2014 in Medellin, Colombia)
- international outreach projects (including but limited to Latin America, Caribbean, Sri Lanka, East Timor and Pacific Islands)
- participation in the Habitat Professionals Forum

Future activities could include:

- Greater ties to the World Town Planning Day online conference;
- Improving the website design to include more direct links to the international and/or domestic works of the partner organisations;
- Using Skype or other low-cost telephony to connect the membership; and
- Inviting news, research, reports from the signatory and supporter members that are less often involved, and posting this information to the website.

Through these activities and its communication the GPN intends to be a credible leader for international planning discourse and thinking reaching decision-makers, planners and communities 'on the ground'. This must be complemented by dealing with planning issues in a representative and inclusive way that addresses both industrialised and developing country concerns, issues and aspirations.

Ultimately through being a credible voice, the GPN will have the responsibility to advocate the importance of planning and to help promote planning as a discipline particularly in contexts and countries where planning is under pressure or being undermined.

Note: the GPN Governance document can be viewed at:

<http://www.globalplannersnetwork.org/pdf/howeare.pdf>