**Introduction**

The Global Consular Forum (GCF) is a strategic initiative aimed at fostering increased international engagement and understanding of current consular policy and practice issues. The GCF is opening up new lines of communication and opportunities for international engagement, cooperation and partnership amongst its members. In September, 2013, the first-ever meeting of Senior Consular Officials of the GCF took place at Wilton Park, UK, with 22 countries and the EU Commission in attendance. The objectives of that first meeting were modest – to gauge interest and willingness by a truly global grouping of countries, representing all regions, a variety of political systems and consular interests, to engage frankly on consular issues of the day.

The response was overwhelmingly positive and resulted in unanimous agreement to establish the GCF as an ongoing venue to foster productive dialogue, engagement and development of international consular policy and practice. The forum is headed by an eight country Steering Committee (Australia, Canada, Mexico, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and United Kingdom) with the Secretariat function currently led by Canada.

**Themes and Chairs**

The second Senior Consular Officials meeting of the GCF is now in planning and will take place May 26-28, 2015 in Mexico. The Steering Committee has identified seven themes / discussion topics for the 2015 meeting agenda. Lead countries (Chairs) have been identified for several themes, while several others remain to be settled. The Themes and Chairs are:

1. Plenary Session: International Legal framework (Country Lead / Chair: Australia)
2. Migrant Workers (Country Leads/Co-Chairs: Mexico/Turkey)
3. Partnering and Technology in Emergency Management (Country Leads/Co-Chairs: UK, Netherlands)
4. Vulnerable Clients (Country Lead/Chair: Sweden)
5. Family Services (Country Leads / Co-Chairs: Canada, Australia)
6. Safe Travel Culture (Country Lead / Chair: USA)
7. Improving Consular Services (Country Lead / Chair: TBC)

Chairs are responsible to gather a critical mass of other countries into a working group that would then develop some sub-topics of that theme for presentation at the meeting as a way to foster discussion and encourage participants to look critically at existing consular practice and procedures.

In addition to other responsibilities, the Secretariat also supports the GCF’s website which is found at:  [**http://globalconsularforum.org/**](http://globalconsularforum.org/)

While the website is a new creation, it already contains a great deal of consular information; dedicated webpages and discussion groups have been created to support development of each of the seven themes of the 2015 meeting agenda.   And more information is being added on an ongoing basis.  At present, the membership of the GCF includes Consular colleagues from some 20+ countries, representing all regions of the world.

**Next steps:**

Ideally, themes will be developed and presented with a view to enhancing or improving international consular policy or practice in the area. As such, the focus of the next meeting will be on developing practical outcomes or courses of action.  While the outcomes could reflect new approaches to an issue arising from its development as a discussion topic, they could also reflect opportunities for consensus, innovation or new partnerships, including with the private sector.

For more information on the Global Consular Forum, please contact the GCF Secretariat at:

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