



# GLOBAL ORGANIZATION OF PEOPLE OF INDIAN ORIGIN

## GOPIO International

GOPIO Convention 2014 – January 05-06, 2014

New Delhi, India

### RESOLUTIONS

#### **RESOLUTION 1**

**Harassment of NRIs & PIOs by BLS International**

*Issue: The procedures established by the Government of India and the services provided by BLS International and VFS to support the Consular Services are so poor, inadequate, lengthy and burdensome that it brings shame and suffering who wish to travel to India for business, family matters, tourism or meetings.*

**Whereas GOPIO commends Government of India for organizing these PBDs in a fabulous manner by spending millions of Rupees; and,**

**Whereas GOPIO commends the well-intentioned Government of India to encourage more visitors to India for PBDs, tourism, business, family matters and meetings; and,**

**Whereas the members of the Indian Diaspora need to make travel arrangements to visit India and need consular services for their VISAs, OCI Cards, and/or New and Renewal of Indian Passports; and,**

**Whereas the Government of India has procured the services of BLS International and VFS to expedite the consular services provided by the Indian Missions abroad; and,**

**Whereas the services provided by the BLS International and VFS are so poor and burdensome, and the behavior of BLS /VFS personnel so terrible that the Indian Missions abroad, and the Government of India are being blamed and receiving a worsening public opinion and press; it is indeed shameful and a disservice to the global Indian community.**

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that GOPIO request Government of India to promptly replace BLS International and VFS with an efficient and competent service agency that can facilitate the workload of Indian Missions and serve the Indian Diaspora with respect, dignity, decency and efficiency.**

## **RESOLUTION 2**

### **Proposed OIC Card & Its Implications**

*Issue: The idea of merging the PIO Card and the OCI Card will create more confusion rather than solving any problems.*

Whereas it may have been considered quite a unique idea to create an OCI card – a misnomer and a deceptive name given to a document that does not represent any Citizenship of India; and,

Whereas this OCI Card has been a subject of ridicule and mockery among the Indian Diaspora; and,

Whereas the Diaspora appreciates the gesture of the Government of India(GOI) to please the Diaspora, at the same time the Diaspora feels humiliated that the GOI plays with the sentiments of its Diaspora; and,

Whereas the process of obtaining the OCI Card is so cumbersome that the applicants feel insulted to the extent that they feel abandoned by India which was never the intent of GOI; and,

Whereas the award of OCI Card and the related Visa in practice are two distinct exercises that make OCI Card a very cumbersome and undesirable exercise; and many innocent travelers have been shunted back from Indian Airports to their original destination; and,

Whereas it is a matter of great shame that officers who make such rules on behalf of GOI lack such common sense that they do not realize the impact their actions make on the Indian Diaspora.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that GOPIO request a hands-on definitive meeting with the Secretaries of MEA, MOIA and MHA to discuss this issue related to the proposed OIC card to avoid follies of OCI Card.

## **RESOLUTION 3**

### **MOIA Needs More Experienced and Relevant Staffing to Serve the Indian Diaspora Properly**

*Issue: The Indian Diaspora is a proven asset to the interests of India and as such it is in the interest of India to properly cultivate the Diaspora by providing better services in order to harness its worldwide strength.*

Whereas the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) through its PBDs and mini PBDs is trying to reach out to the Indian Diaspora; and,

Whereas the Ministry has undertaken several projects such as Kolkata Memorial and Gadar Centennial Celebrations and has tried to give appropriate support; and,

Whereas a little additional support and responsiveness would not only add more projects but would allow completion of projects at hand more efficiently.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that GOPIO recommend to GOI to provide more financial & personnel resources to MOIA for additional, experienced and appropriately assigned staffing to respond to these needs, concerns and interests.

## **RESOLUTION 4**

### **Investments in India by NRIs & PIOs**

*Issue: There are different privileges for the investors from India and the investors from overseas; these privileges should be the same for all to encourage inflow of funds for investment in India.*

Whereas the Government of India is always looking for foreign investments and fortunately the Indian Diaspora is blessed with financial resources and the desire to serve mother India; and,

Whereas the Diaspora finds that the protection provided the Investors in India is not available to NRIs & PIOs; and,

Whereas this kind of dichotomy discourages NRIs & PIOs from investing in India.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that GOPIO encourage the respective ministries of the Government of India to resolve these differences in privileges in order to encourage more inflow of investments from NRIs and PIOs.

## **RESOLUTION 5**

### **Image of India as a Country**

*Issue: The many continuing reports of corruption and lack of law and order make the Indian Diaspora hopelessly embarrassed and disenchanted about the country of their ancestors.*

Whereas the Indian Diaspora is proud to note the tremendous progress India has made in important fields such as technology, nuclear energy, education, and economy and has emerged as the most qualified nation to occupy a seat at the UN Security Council as a permanent member; and,

Whereas the image of India and its Diaspora is so intertwined that both the positives and the negatives of each affects the other; that is, both have stakes in each other's prosperity; and,

Whereas the prevalence of corruption and lack of judicial enforcement of law and order in India have brought shame and disillusionment to the Diaspora as the stories of corruption keep growing.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that GOPIO bring this issue to the attention of the Government of India at the highest level so that appropriate and necessary remedies may be enacted for the image of India so that its image would no longer be tarnished by accusation of corruption, and India can take its legitimate permanent place at the Security Council.

## **RESOLUTION 6**

### **International Indian Emigration Day**

*Issue: The Indian Diaspora has created a unique history of progress in various countries. To keep them connected and related to India is in India's interest. The Kolkata Monument was a great example of this unique relationship of India connecting with the Diaspora.*

**WHEREAS** the global Indian Diaspora outside of India currently numbers about 30 million residing in several countries; and

**WHEREAS** most of these PIOs are the descendants of Indian laborers who emigrated from India during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and,

**WHEREAS** the first arrival of indentured laborers to each major former British colony is designated as "Indian Arrival Day" and is proudly observed annually with social and cultural events; and,

**WHEREAS** countries such as Guyana, Mauritius, South Africa, Suriname, Fiji, Trinidad, Guadeloupe and others with significant population of PIOs hold major events marking their respective "Arrival Day;" and,

**WHEREAS** the respective dates of "Arrival Day" of individual countries are different because the date of arrival of the first ship was designated as the "Arrival Day" for each country; and,

**WHEREAS** in some cases the population of PIOs is relatively small and their respective "Arrival Day" is hardly observed, although there is a desire to mark the date in some meaningful and significant manner.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that GOPIO appeal to Diasporic Countries to identify and designate a single, universal date that would appeal to all PIOs as a common date that can be observed by all and used in a significant way to better connect the Diaspora and that date could be called International Indian Emigration Day.

## **RESOLUTION 7**

### **Selection of Programs and Speakers for Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBDs)**

*Issue: There is a widespread dissatisfaction among PBD delegates on the process of program and speaker selection.*

**WHEREAS** we salute the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for organizing the fabulous PBDs annually; and,

**WHEREAS** it has been noted that several of the Speakers and Presiders are repeated year after year which indicates as if the Diaspora is short of qualified people contrary to fact; and,

**WHEREAS** many of the program sessions are designed without consultation of the global Indian community for suggestions, recommendations and feedback; and,

**WHEREAS** too many PBD Speakers and Presiders are from India while PBD is to celebrate Pravasis.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RERSOLVED** that GOPIO recommend to the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs to seek suggestions, recommendations and feedback as well as suitably qualified speakers from among the overseas Indian Diaspora for the PBD 2015 and beyond.

## **RESOLUTION 8**

### **Philanthropic Contributions & FCRA Process**

*Issue: The India Diaspora's desire to serve India in as many fields as possible is well-known; especially in the field of education & healthcare through philanthropic contributions. The FCRA process is a great hindrance.*

Whereas the Prime Minister of India realizing this problem in January 2008 announced the start of "India Development Foundation" (IDF\_OI) to serve as the focal point for Diasporic philanthropy; and,

Whereas the IDF-OI did work in certain cases for some time without getting through the maze of FCRA process; and,

Whereas despite several assurances by the high officials of Government of India, bypassing the FCRA process has recently come to a halt.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that GOPIO take up this issue with the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs to ease the involvement of FCRA in facilitating philanthropic contributions to India by the Diaspora.

## **RESOLUTION 9**

*Issue: Discriminatory language in the re-issuance of OCI Card for the two age groups below 50 and above 50 years with no valid reason.*

Whereas there are many unpleasant burdens imposed upon the OCI Card holders such as to carry the Passport having a "U" Visa Sticker and simultaneously carry the OCI card for entry into/exit from India; and,

Whereas the applicants between the ages of 21 and 49 do not need to get OCI re-issued each time if they have a New Passport but the applicants above 50 require to have their OCI re-issued each time they get a new passport; and,

Whereas there is no apparent reason for this discriminatory rule.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RERSOLVED** that GOPIO takes up this issue with appropriate authorities in the Government of India.

## ***RESOLUTION 10***

### **Restriction of Import/Export of Indian Currency on NRIs/PIOs**

*Issue: Indian Customs issued an updated Guide for Travelers in May 2013 that allows Indian Residents to Import/Export up to Rs.7,500 but prohibits NRIs & PIOs the same privilege.*

**Whereas it is the privilege of Government of India (GOI) to make the rules at its own pleasure; and,**

**Whereas the GOI has been working very hard to reach out to the Indian Diaspora; and,**

**Whereas the rules that distinguish the two groups of Resident Indians & Non-Resident Indians into separate categories just for travel purposes without giving sufficient notice creates unnecessary hardship.**

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that GOPIO take up this issue with the concerned Ministry.**