UNSP launches “A Day at the UN”

Ever wonder what it feels like to work for the United Nations? Whether it is fulfilling or frustrating? Whether it matches the highest ideals of public service? Or whether it is just another bureaucratic institution? Well, thanks to the DAY @ the UN initiative launched this semester by the UN Studies Program, 42 lucky students were given the opportunity to gain more insight on what it means to work for the United Nations. From the office of the Secretary General to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, from UNDP and UNICEF to DPA and UNWOMEN, from UNFPA to the Security Council, from UNCDF to the PBC, each student was given the opportunity to shadow one senior UN official for an entire day, attending meetings and negotiations, participating to teleconferences with the field or weighing in on policy planning among many others.

On April 6, 2011, students will share their experience during a Panel organized by the UN Studies Program in the presence of their hosts and other SIPA students. The Panel will take place on 420 W 118th street room 1501 from 6 to 8pm and will be followed by a reception creating yet another opportunity for students to thank their hosts, and of course, to network with the UN Community.

Come and join us.

Michelle Bachelet:
Guest of UNSP at SIPA

Bringing Humanity to Politics

By Atossa Araxia Abrahamian

On March 2nd, 2011, former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet paid SIPA’s United Nations Studies Program a visit just in time to commemorate one hundred years of women’s achievement. The event was a smashing success: there exist few advocates for women’s rights who are as active, outspoken, and charismatic as Ms. Bachelet, and her enthusiasm for equality and women’s empowerment was all but contagious.

Students and onlookers filled the room to the brim to hear Ms. Bachelet speak about her professional and personal experiences as a doctor, a politician, and a mother. UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer moderated as a smiling, vivacious Bachelet chatted about her childhood, her experiences in Chilean politics, and the challenges that await her as the head of the new United Nations entity for women’s empowerment, UN Women. Continued on p. 2

For previous newsletters, visit http://www.sipa.columbia.edu/academics/concentrations/unsp/
Bringing Humanity to Politics

(Cont. from p. 1)

Bachelet began by pointing out that although International Women’s Day was approaching, there wasn’t much to celebrate in many parts of the world. Women’s advancement, she said, has stalled: Millennium Development Goal 3, which advocates for gender equality, has shown the slowest progress of all the MDGs, and maternal deaths - the vast majority of which are easily preventable - are still at 350,000 per year. MDG 6 - to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases - affects women and children the most, and is a long way away from being reached. “[MDGs] are a minimum for humanity,” she added.

Bachelet’s most impassioned pleas were to do with the low rate of women’s participation in politics. “Women need to be relevant and visible in decision making positions,” she said, recalling her own experience as a leader in public health - a typically “female” role - but also as the Defense Minister of her country, a position that is viewed as decidedly non-feminine (one needs only to think back to Hillary Clinton’s run for the American Presidency, and the doubts that arose about whether she could be Commander in Chief). Bachelet acknowledged this problem, and insisted that the symbolism of women in power was a crucial element in attaining gender equality.

“It is also important to put women in interesting, powerful positions to show society that women can do it, and do it well.”

With her characteristic humor, Bachelet recounted the reluctance with which the army initially accepted her; they were not used to saying hello to a woman (Chilean custom dictates that men and women greet by kissing on the cheek.) But, she continued, they got used to it – and even seemed upset when she was too busy for the bise. The number of women in the Naval Academies, said Bachelet, increased, too. She hopes the same will happen in the United Nations.

When asked about how she would confront the “male majority” at the United Nations, Bachelet responded that she did not have to play by their rules. “You can change the rules!” she exclaimed, adding that she did not want to become a “UN person” who converses exclusively in obscure acronyms. “It’s my worst nightmare!” she joked. “I want to think outside the box.”

Still, Bachelet has high hopes for UN Women. She outlined her four main goals: expanding female leadership capacity; economic empowerment; peace and security; and ending violence against women all over the world. Bachelet intends to lead UN Women with the approach she has become known for: personable, warm, caring, and genuine. It is ultimately an apolitical attitude:

“We have the right to be happy,” she said. “It’s not all about economy. It’s feeling that the people in charge care about you.”

Most importantly, said Bachelet, it is crucial to have empathy

“I went into politics for emotion. I couldn’t stand the suffering of poor people,” she said. “I know it sounds womanly,” she added, “but it’s not hormones. It’s a hunch. Every time I didn’t follow my hunch, it was a disaster!”

Call it women’s intuition, or a savvy sixth sense – what matters the most is that Bachelet is in the position to use it for the benefit of all women.

“Symbolism is so important,” she said. “As minister of health, no-one saw me as President. But when they saw me in a tank with a military uniform, they thought, if she can deal with the Military...”

A group of Chilean students pose with Michelle Bachelet
"A Day at the UN:” A View from the Inside

Stephen Gray – Mediation Unit

"I was surprised at the level of access and support we received on the day. The time spent with the staff was invaluable, not least of all because they share my interest in southern Sudan, and I was able to learn firsthand how UNMIS is reshaping its mandate and means by which I might become involved in future peacekeeping operations."

Ameera Horriyat – Security Council

"I learned a great deal and it was truly a great experience for me. I was smitten by the Security Council Director’s character; her vision and strength were so inspiring. Perhaps I was more taken by her patience and humility. She explained to me that she was once a secretary and how she had worked her way up from the very bottom. She told me how important it is not to give up on your dreams and that hard work and dedication pay off in the end.”

Muhamamd Waqas Halim – Somalia Desk, Department of Peacekeeping Operations

“Coming back from lunch, I was introduced to the Marine officer of the department which was an Indian Navy officer. Meeting an Indian soldier for a Pakistani is inconceivable but that came true through this platform too. I found it amusing when the Indian Navy Officer said that my features resemble his and he considers himself more a Pakistani then an Indian.”

Giancarlo Cavallo – Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)

“My one-on-one conversations with PBSO staff members were comfortable and informative. With the Guinea-Bissau and CAR Officer, I got the chance to learn more about what exactly PBC’s role is (or can be), and how it is executed. And with the Sierra Leone Officer, the discussion took a more conceptual tone, as we discussed the importance of national ownership in the peacebuilding strategies.”

Petra Aldrich - UNICEF

"Over the course of the rest of the day I had no less than seven informational interviews with various staff. After meeting with everyone in Strategic Partnerships, I visited the playfully-nicknamed Toilet Team (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) of whom it was particularly fun to ask the question, “can you tell me how you became interested in this line of work?” My hosts were very responsive to my interests. When I mentioned my interest in monitoring and evaluation, they first arranged for me to join a webinar on developing organizational capacity in program evaluation and then scheduled an appointment for me with a Senior Evaluation Specialist in the Evaluation Office.”

Harriet Riley – Office of the Spokesperson

“I’m a journalism student, so the best thing for me was realizing that a journalist doesn’t just have to report the news, they can be involved in making it too. The Office of the Spokesperson was full of duel reporter-diplomats who help the Organization deal with the press. Everyone was friendly and helpful, right up the Spokesperson, Martin Nesirky himself, who took the time to talk to me about his career and how he’d risen to his position. My favorite thing about this office was the sense of commitment and camaraderie among the staff; they could rely on each other to get the job done.”

Thomas Ritzer – Department of Peacekeeping Operations – Situation Centre

“It is early morning at the Situation Centre of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The daily briefings are coming in from all the operations across the world. How does the no-fly zone imposed by Mr. Gbagbo affect the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI)? How can all this information be summarized in a concise way to form a solid briefing for the leadership at DPKO? What is a regular day for the staff at the Situation Centre was an exceptional day for me. I thoroughly enjoyed taking a look behind the scenes at the headquarters of UN peacekeeping.”

Ameera Allman – UNICEF

“This placement was an ideal combination of where I’ve been in my career, where I am as a student and where I hope to go as a professional. Their work is policymaking in action. It helped me expand what I already know about development cooperation into a different perspective.”

David Saeger - United Nations Population Fund - UNFPA

“After wrapping up our conversation I had what was perhaps the highlight of my experience at UNFPA which was the opportunity to sit down and lunch with a group from the executive director’s office. Our lunchtime conversations ranged from the differences in management in non-profit and for-profit environments to the different styles to the way that stereotypes color so many everyday interactions between people. Throughout lunch and in every interaction which I had during my day everyone I met was open with their opinions and seemed to be sincerely invested in what I had to say. I can only imagine that this is a testament to both the integrity and personality of the type of personnel that the UNFPA attracts but also to the nature of the relationship which SIPA has with the program.”


"We had a great day for the staff at the Situation Centre was an exceptional day for me. I thoroughly enjoyed taking a look behind the scenes at the headquarters of UN peacekeeping.”
The PBPS, which is located within the Policy, Evaluation and Training Division of DPKO, supports peacekeeping operations by developing mechanisms that encourage the sharing of knowledge and the transfer of best practices among peacekeeping missions worldwide. The research team conducted analytical research on the basis of various documents provided by PBPS with a view to identifying valuable best practices and lessons learned. The students created a matrix as a means to classify information and used this methodology to devise a set of findings related to key areas of interest for PBPS. These areas of interest encompassed a variety of themes related to military, police, civilian, and mission support and included topics as diverse as the peacekeeping/peacebuilding nexus, rule of law, mission integration, and the protection of civilians. The ultimate goal of the research was to assist PBPS in its assessment of the best practices utilized in response to challenges faced so that they can continue to advise missions on how to incorporate these lessons into their own planning and policy development. In February 2011 the students had the exciting opportunity to present their findings to a packed room at the UN, including to special assistants of a number of Assistant Secretary-Generals at DPKO.

Capstone Project: The Role of Natural Resources in Sustainable Peace in Sudan

The UN Studies Program, in close consultation with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, is conducting a research project on the impact of oil and water on peace and security in Sudan. This Spring 2011 Capstone Project has focused in particular on the effect of natural resources in Southern Sudan, which is in the midst of substantial transitions following the January 2011 when the people of Southern Sudan voted to secede from the larger Sudan.

The team, led by Professor Lindenmayer, is producing an analytic paper that includes recommendations on how the international community can most effectively engage the parties in Sudan on the topic of natural resources in order to bring stability to the region. In particular, the project is looking at the issue from political and economic perspectives, as well as through the lens of the peacekeeping missions in the region. The recommendations will include possible arrangements between the two sides that will support a long-term peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial use of oil and water, as well as highlight potential priorities for the Government of Southern Sudan in fostering economic growth, security, and good governance through the use of natural resources.

Students discussing their Sudan research
UNSP Continues Its Working Lunch Series with UN Ambassadors

In 2009, the UNSP launched a “Working Lunch Series with UN Ambassadors.” The purpose of these lunches is to give SIPA students access to the current thinking of the UN’s diplomatic community on specific issues, while at the same time providing UN Ambassadors the opportunity to hear students’ views and perspectives on topics of mutual concern and interest. It is meant to continue strengthening the relationship between the United Nations and SIPA and create an ongoing dialogue between the world of international politics and academia.

UNSP Gives Students the Opportunity to Discuss Peacebuilding with the Ambassador of Canada to the UN

By Chelsea Kinsman

On January 28, 2011, nearly 30 SIPA students had the opportunity to travel with Professor Lindenmayer to Canada’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations. The group met with the Permanent Representative of Canada, Ambassador John McNee, to discuss peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and development, as well as the overall UN structure and organization.

Ambassador McNee emphasized that peacebuilding is not a new phenomenon, despite recent heightened interest in the topic. Much of the UN’s experience came first out of European reconstruction after World War II, and then more recently following conflict in the Balkans and Timor-Leste. Yet, the Ambassador noted that a number of factors have drawn renewed attention to peacebuilding. The first is the World Bank’s Annual Development Report focused on conflict and development that explores the pernicious factors that hinder peacebuilding.

A second and persistent reminder of peacebuilding’s importance, according to Ambassador McNee, is the threat posed by unstable territories, which continue to contribute to global insecurity. The UN, however, has learned from its previous peacebuilding operations and as a result, some of its approaches have changed. For example, there is now a greater focus on promoting national ownership of development operations, and a consensus that early peacebuilding should complement peacekeeping operations, rather than being completely separate. These lessons learned have surfaced from previous instances of missed opportunities in the early years of post-conflict development because of a lack of coordination between peacekeeping and development.

The Ambassador then turned to the role that Canada has played in peacebuilding efforts worldwide, noting that Canada’s foreign policy has three primary geographic foci: Afghanistan, Sudan, and Haiti. In Afghanistan, Canada’s role is now non-combat related and is focused on training security forces and establishing rule of law in the coalition government of Kabul and Kandahar.

In Sudan, Canada is focused on strengthening judicial systems and capacity building within the Southern Sudanese government. Ambassador McNee noted that he was surprised that the referendum went so smoothly and that the question now is whether South Sudan needs additional peacebuilding support or simply development support.

Given that natural resources are the heart of the conflict in Sudan, there are large possibilities for corruption and the Ambassador suggested that other resource rich African countries, such as Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone, could provide lessons and models for South Sudan. Canada’s third foreign policy focus is Haiti, and with its strong cultural and linguistic ties this focus is expected to continue for a long time.

Most recently, Canada provided technical support during the Haitian elections and Canadian police have been training local Haitian law enforcement officials.

Beyond these three focuses, the Ambassador has been involved with many different projects and peacebuilding missions at the UN, but stated that he is most proud of his work on Sierra Leone. As the Peacebuilding Chair for Sierra Leone, he worked closely with the UN Head of Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone who he described as an “anti-bureaucrat” who worked hard to strengthen the national government. He noted that Sierra Leone is now doing so well that it may soon come off the UN’s peacebuilding agenda entirely.

The Ambassador devoted several hours to questions and discussion with students, which provided attendees with a tremendous opportunity to hear his viewpoints and experiences. It was also valuable to share and exchange ideas learned in an academic setting with a practitioner at the UN.
United Nations Security Council - S-5 Working Lunch

By Scott E. Hartley

On Friday February 11, 2011, twenty-one first- and second-year SIPA students arrived at the Singaporean Mission to the United Nations to address, over a working lunch, issues related to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and role of the Small Five (S-5). The S-5, consisting of Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore, and Switzerland, have joined forces to focus on reforming the UNSC’s working methods, advocating for enhanced transparency and accountability and better integration of non-members.

Among those in attendance were the Permanent Representative of Singapore, Mr. Vanu Gopala Menon, and the Deputy Permanent Representatives to the United Nations from Liechtenstein and Jordan. The lunch, organized by Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer, provided students with an especially interesting perspective given the historical context of the day. Not more than two hours prior to the SIPA working lunch, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak had resigned from leadership after 30-years, and the S-5 representatives in attendance had just departed the Security Council. While CNN and Al Jazeera circulated rumors that Mubarak had fled to Sharm el-Sheikh, students in the room became privy to the possibility that UAE had already granted asylum.

Despite the momentous history being made in the Maghreb, the conversation in New York turned to Security Council reform, specifically, potential enlargement of the council and alteration of working methods, and the role the S-5 could play in managing such change.

While media attention has focused on President Obama’s support for Indian accession to the Security Council, and David Cameron’s support for Brazil, the Singaporean PR viewed permanent expansion with pessimism, explaining that expansion would require a charter amendment, meaning that its alteration would require a difficult vote and parliamentary approval. In addition, enlargement of the UNSC would call into question its credibility and legitimacy. This would in effect call into question the potentially tenuous positions of France and United Kingdom as members of the P-5 in altering the status quo of 15 members deciding for 192 member states. It was also suggested, however, that a long-term rotational seat of 10-15 years could potentially help address grievances while ensuring fluidity within the Council.

Those in attendance at the lunch argued that alteration to the UNSC’s Working Methods could be a more viable short-term goal for the S-5 and other members to pursue. Commenting on Mubarak’s resignation, the Jordanian DPR highlighted the UNSC’s inaction in freezing Mubarak’s assets, an allegedly embezzled $60 billion, or three times Egypt’s national debt. While Switzerland had moved to freeze his assets, the UNSC has not. The Jordanian DPR also emphasized that frozen assets of Saddam Hussein have yet to be returned to the Iraqi people due to hang-ups in the UNSC process, further elucidating the imperative for reform.

According to the representatives of the S-5, reform of the UNSC’s working methods can ensure that such grievances are addressed. Yet, the representatives agreed that reform will take time, and may only be viable in response to challenges the UNSC faces in reaching conclusions on issues such as the Middle East peace process. However, Liechtenstein offered hope in stating simply that progress begins with interests. By finding a nation with similar interests, he stated, one can partner to advance issues of mutual importance.

UNSC enlargement may remain stalled, but students left the working lunch with the S-5 with the view that such a group may provide foundation for progress on the issue of UNSC working method reform.
The Immediacy of Leadership: A Conversation with SIPA Alumna Margaret Carey,

By Harriet Riley

Margaret Carey, Director of the Africa Division at the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) talks to Harriet Riley about the pressures and triumphs of life in the field. Margaret Carey featured in the ‘The Peacekeepers’, a 2005 documentary on MONUSCO directed by Canadian filmmaker Paul Cowan. Says Carey “It gives you an idea of what people in New York do during a peacekeeping mission, as well as what happens in the field.”

Q: What exactly does a Director do?
MC: I’m a D-2, which is the highest rank before Assistant Secretary-General. We run operations related to a specific geographic region within our department. I’m responsible for Africa1, covering the missions in the Sudan. In the past, I’ve worked on missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, Mozambique and Rwanda.

Q: What made you choose the United Nations?
MC: I was going to be a journalist. I studied philosophy at Boston University, then took an internship with UPI (United Press International) in London, but wasn’t keen on the idea of working my way up the newswire hierarchy. Beside, I’d decided I’d rather work from the inside, not the outside looking in. After finishing my Masters at SIPA I applied to a consultancy post with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and stayed there for five years as the desk officer for Southeast Asia. I never had the dream of working for the UN. I fell into it by chance, but once I was in, I loved it.

Q: What is it about the field that you love so much?
MC: There’s adrenalin in the immediacy of it. These are life of death situations that have an impact on people right in front of you. So there’s a positive tendency to get the job done and ask questions later. You can do more with fewer bosses and less bureaucracy.

(Continued on p. 8)
Q: What's an average day in the field like?
MC: There is no average day in the field. It’s never going to go as you planned it to go.
I was working in Darfur recently. It’s a Chapter 7 operation, dealing with the protection of civilians in an area of ongoing conflict. My job involved everything from developing political strategies with government and civil society to figuring out what to do when we couldn’t get clearance for an urgent assessment mission. It’s all about guiding and working with your staff to figure out problems and how to move forward.

Q: Had you traveled much before joining the UN?
MC: I’d lived in Nepal, spending part of the time living in a Tibetan refugee camp. I’d always wanted to do work in South Asia.

Q: Not Africa?
MC: You might think you’re not interested in a particular place or culture but once you see it, you learn it, you end up loving it.
I started out working on issues in Asia, but I am very pleased to work on issues in Africa. Besides, I want to go wherever the work is most exciting, most challenging.

Q: But your work can be very dangerous as well. Have you ever felt afraid?
MC: There have been a few times, flying in bumpy planes and helicopters, when I’ve felt in danger. But not many. UN staff tend to self-select for cool headedness. The stickier the situation is, the better they are. It’s what they’ve trained for, it’s what they’ve experienced. So I trust the UN troops who provide security for us civilians. If I had to pick one incident, it would be in the refugee camps in former Zaire just after the Rwandan genocide. We were on the outskirts of Goma; it was a desolate place, just volcanic ash for miles, and everywhere I could see thousands upon thousands of people. There was almost no way of knowing who were the Interahamwe and who were the real refugees. There were only three or four of us there to assess the situation and I thought, just for a moment, if they decide they don’t want us here they could simply overwhelm us. But it didn’t happen. The only other times I’ve felt really afraid involve other people’s lives, not my own.

Q: You said that you’ve worked with a lot of cool-headed people. But have you ever had to deal with any difficult ones?
MC: Sure. The best way to deal with a difficult person is to build a relationship with them. Some people won’t believe that if they read it, I know, because they’ll tell you that I’m a difficult person. But at this level, there are going to be very tough very committed people who will go out of their way to get the job done. My biggest weakness is a lack of patience, but you can’t just steamroller through people. If you form a relationship with a difficult person, it opens up lines of communication.

Q: What advice do you have for young professionals who might want to join the DPKO?
MC: If I’m hiring, the most important requirement is experience in the field. I can tell the difference between someone who has spent time in the field and someone who hasn’t. It changes the way you think about a crisis. You can get that experience with national governments, NGOs or the United Nations Volunteers.
But once you’re inside the UN, where you end up will depend where there is the need. You have to be flexible, because there are so many departments that might want your skills. Take all the opportunities you can, but keep aiming for what you want.
The Security Council Takes on Security and Development

By Yassine Cherkaoui

Attending a regular United Nations Security Council (UNSC) session as a student is almost an uncanny experience. Sitting in the overhanging platform, one witnesses the choreographed ballet of officials, special representatives, ministers, ambassadors and other aids who dwell in the corridors of this august bureaucratic institution. Statements are made, resolutions are drafted, warnings and condemnations are issued, and members congratulate and/or castigate the Council. The tone is polished, the rhetoric to mediate negotiations between the parties on post-referendum arrangements.

In their statements, UNSC members praised both parties for the peaceful and orderly conduct of the voting process and called on all involved to maintain close cooperation in the pivotal months to come. UNSC members also emphasized, however, the many challenges the parties still face in addressing the outstanding issues, including border demarcation between the north and south, wealth-sharing agreements, and a resolution to the question of Abyei.

In a number of moving moments throughout the meeting, other Council members emphasized the significance of the referendum to the people of Southern Sudan. United States Ambassador Susan Rice stated, “We have all heard reports of long lines forming overnight on 8 January and of people standing in line for hours to vote. We have even heard of a case in which a river ferry broke down and voters jumped into the presumably crocodile-infested river and swam across to reach the polling station.”

Students left the UNSC meeting with a clearer understanding of the historic nature of the referendum and the importance of self-determination for the people of Southern Sudan. Yet, the meeting also illustrated the challenges that remain for both parts of Sudan as the countries seek to attain sustainable peace, stability, and development in the next stage of their shared history.
only after the end of the Cold War. Granted, the notion that economic well-being reduces conflicts is something underscored by the UN Charter’s article 55, which states that “with a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being [...] the United Nations shall promote [...] higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development.” Still, peace-building, defined by the Peace Building Commission as “the inter-linkages between security and development interventions in post-conflict situations,” has risen to the forefront only after UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali issued his Agenda for Peace in 1992. Later on, this seminal work was followed by two landmark publications which further advocated for the expansion of non-military components in peacekeeping operations: the 2000 Brahimi Report and the 2009 New Horizon Report. Today, the interest for the topic still runs high, as evidenced by the 60 plus country representatives who took turn to make a statement at the open debate. At the helm of this particular session, it is hardly surprising, yet fundamentally novel, to find Brazil. The South American country has extensive experience in post-conflict reconstruction due to its heavy involvement in UN missions such as the one currently taking place in Haiti, and it seems natural that Brasilia uses its presidency of the Council to push for the scaling up of UNSC sanctioned peace-building operations. The novelty however resides in the dynamics within the UNSC that originate in the increasing assertiveness of nations like Brazil and India in international affairs. These countries, which are endowed with sizeable fast growing economies and possess a large political clout among developing nations, are striving to appear as natural candidates for a permanent seat at the Council, in the event it is reformed. To do so, they cultivate their independence, endorse multilateralism and pose themselves as responsible players capable of offering and pushing for valid alternative solutions to world issues. As a result, these emerging international heavyweights contribute to the progressive reshaping of the UNSC. With this high level open debate, Brazilian authorities have certainly succeeded in setting up the international agenda and raising awareness on “the importance of associating development with the security strategies conceived [by the Security Council] for sustainable peace.” This is by no mean a small feat: the infusion of norms in the UNSC is a slow and incremental process and the merit of Brazil, the first country to formally address this issue in the council, ought to be acknowledged. The UN system however is riddled with parochial and political concerns over the prerogatives and mandates of its organs, chief among them the UNSC, and the February 11 session showed that getting over existing dissentions is far from easy. Indeed, marked disagreements remained on the definition of the responsibilities of the institutional actors in charge of achieving sustainable peace. Nations belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement issued a statement in which they maintain that “[development] goes beyond the core competencies of the Security Council” while countries like Belgium, Morocco or Thailand consider that “post-conflict peace-building must be closely linked to the primary responsibilities of the [UN Security] Council”. Not surprisingly, at the end of the debate, no firm consensus emerged on the required strategy to achieve a comprehensive approach to peace-building and the role that the UNSC should have in it. This shows up in the meeting’s Presidential Statement where the Council reiterates the centrality of the maintenance of international peace to its mandate. While the document acknowledges that the UNSC indeed needs to consider social and economic issues in order to discharge its responsibilities, it also states that it can only do so only insofar as these issues are drivers of conflict, represent a challenge to the implementation of Council mandates or endanger the process of consolidation of peace. The topic tackled shows a slow but steady evolution of the Security Council approach to peacekeeping and peace-building, and the meeting was a clear success for Brazil which takes on a new stature on the international scene. Above all, however, it is the unwinding of the revolution in Tahrir Square that day that gave a special feel to the UNSC meeting of February 11. Indeed, while the German Representative was the only one to explicitly refer to the situation in Egypt in his statement, the events occurring in Cairo certainly account for the restlessness that diplomats and officials exuded that day. In short, the high level open debate on security and development chaired by Brazil departed from usual UNSC sessions and will be remembered for that. It should not come as a surprise however that the meeting did not end up with a proposal for a revolutionary reform of the Council. After all, we shan’t forget that, in this last bastion of diplomacy, it is evolution, not revolution, that serves as a leitmotiv for the powers that be!
The United Nations Studies Program Newsletter


INAF S6559D. The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century: Challenges and Alternatives

Does the United Nations matter? The course will offer a broad assessment and analysis of the place, performance and potential of the United Nations within the nation-state system. It will assess the world body based on a range of distinct expectations through the prism of global threats, global norms and global responsibilities. Increasingly the world is confronted with phenomena - related to both security and development - which require global responses; the question this course seeks to answer is to what extent can we rely on the UN to act as a global instrument for constructive change?

INAF S6563D. The United Nations: History And Practice Of Security Council Sanctions

Do sanctions work? This course will examine the history and use of multilateral sanctions as an instrument of coercion in the restoration and maintenance of international peace and security. Students will analyze the logic behind the imposition of international sanctions, explore specific factors that enhance and impede sanctions effectiveness, including their perceived credibility, the role of monitoring and enforcement, and challenges to sanctions legitimacy. The course will emphasize practical case studies and perspectives and students will benefit from regular guest speakers who have participated in various Security Council sanctions episodes.

INAF S6567Q. Challenges of UN Post-conflict Peacebuilding in Africa

The objective of this course is to develop a shared understanding of the theory and practice of post-conflict peacebuilding within the context of the evolving nature of UN peace operations and as part of ongoing efforts to improve the international community’s collective ability to facilitate sustainable peace processes in countries emerging from conflict. Current Security Council-mandated peace operations, the challenges and dilemmas they face will be used as case studies to help attain the above objective. Because Africa has been the most important regional setting for these peace operations and has had a critical impact in defining their limitations and possibilities, the case studies will be drawn primarily from UN peacebuilding engagement in Africa.

INAF S6569Q. The UN and Development

This six-week course will provide an analytical framework with which to understand the transformation that has characterized development thinking and practice at the United Nations over the last twenty years. It will familiarize participants with the key UN reports and resolutions that define the UN’s contribution and reflect on the evolution in development cooperation in practice through the prism of one UN institution in particular, in this case the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). It will also analyze current debates about the future of development cooperation and the evolving shape of multilateralism. The course will provide practical examples and draw from the extensive practical experience of the instructor.

For UNSP’s latest activities, please visit our new blog at http://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/unsp/.

Newsletter created by Geraldine Ang