UNSP, CRWG Plan to Return to North Korea

Interested in going next May? Look for details in the upcoming months, and read the recap from last year’s trip now:

By Daniel Emory and Alana Ngoh

Let’s face it: Despite SIPA’s internationally diverse and globe-hopping student body, North Korea doesn’t appear on many travel itineraries.

The inaccessibility of the ‘hermit kingdom’ may help explain why over 140 people packed into the top floor of the International Affairs Building on October 2 for ‘A First Glimpse of North Korea.’

Organized jointly by SIPA’s United Nations Studies Program (UNSP) and Conflict Resolution Working Group (CRWG), ‘A First Glimpse of North Korea’ gave the 15 students who embarked on the first-ever American university-sponsored trip to the DPRK an opportunity to share their experiences and comment on the extremely isolated and often misunderstood North Korean society.

“Going on a trip like this really makes you think about everything you read – I saw a human side of the country that we don’t often hear about and it gave me a whole new perspective,” said Michelle Hanf (MPA ’13).

Sandra Choi (MIA ’13) echoed these sentiments. “It’s important not to judge a book by its cover,” she said. “We are less likely to alienate countries and ‘other-ize’ them if we understand their culture and values.”

The panel began with the students relating their most significant takeaways and observations from the trip. The group discussed a souvenir store that didn’t hold enough foreign currency, a manufacturing plant where “nothing seemed in sync,” and the lack of cars and bicycles on the roads.

“TaeYoung Kim (MIA ’13), who helped organize the trip, recalled meeting an officer in the Demilitarized Zone with a dubious version of Korean War history – an exchange that left him sobered by the enduring “power of ideology.”

But the students also juxtaposed many of the misconceived notions of North Korea with what they saw.

Pushkar Sharma (MPA ’13) explained how through interactions with their guides and spending a night at an amusement park with other North Korean families, the group began to slowly understand “the logic to what is portrayed as the illogical nature of North Korea.” He even described an encounter with a Nepalese man at the (Cont. Page 6)
“Providing Access and Understanding”

Professor Lindenmayer Discusses the Mission of the UNSP

By Sarah Goldman

When Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer joined the SIPA faculty after close to 30 years of experience at the UN, mostly in peacekeeping and the political world, she had two goals in mind: to help students understand the United Nation’s purposes, including the complexity of consensus-building in an international organization made of 193 countries, and expose them to the challenges and realities of the field.

“How can I make students better understand the complexity of a multilateral organization and a global instrument?” Lindenmayer asked. “How can I make sure that students realize that the UN has a human face and that politics is human?”

These questions get to the heart of the United Nations Studies Program (UNSP). According to Lindenmayer, the philosophy of the program is to build the synergy between the United Nations and SIPA and make it accessible to students.

The UNSP seeks to fulfill its goals using a variety of tools: teaching, research, panels, fieldwork, and a number of other UN related initiatives.

“One of the difficulties and advantages is that there is no requirement for my program. It’s kind of confusing for students because at the beginning they always ask ‘What do I need to do to be part of the program?’” explained Lindenmayer. “And I say, ‘all you need is to bring your motivation to learn about UN affairs. In a way there is no stronger requirement a program can have!’

The UNSP builds on its proximity to the United Nations and provides unique access and opportunities for students to engage directly with top-level practitioners and members of the diplomatic world.

Programs initiated by the UNSP include high-level panels and Working Lunches. For the high-level panels, UN Ambassadors, peacekeepers, diplomats, heads of NGOs, journalists and other experts in negotiation and conflict resolution come to SIPA to discuss topics related to current events and the goals of the United Nations.

The Working Lunch Series with UN Ambassadors intends to expose students to the thinking of the member states. Permanent Representatives to the UN invite UNSP members to their private residencies or Missions for an active, engaging discussion on issues currently debated at the UN. Nations who have hosted past working lunches include: Egypt, Turkey, India, Libya, Pakistan, Brazil, Singapore, Liechtenstein, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, France, The Netherlands and many others. The chosen discussion subjects include their experiences in the Security Council, the G-20s, peace building, nuclear proliferation, the ICC, the future of the MDGs, the threats of the 21st century, the role of emerging powers and many more.

The UNSP also arranges for students to directly access the United Nations through trips to the Security Council. This year, students witnessed an unprecedented Security Council meeting on the International Criminal Court chaired by Guatemala, as well as a high level meeting on the crisis in the Sahel chaired by Morocco. Students were in the Council for the passage of a major resolution on Women, Peace and Security, chaired by Hillary Clinton, and for the first meeting where South Sudan addressed the Council as a new country.

The very popular and competitive initiative ‘A Day at the United Nations: A View From Inside’ provides students with a glimpse of what it means to work at the United Nations, and shows students the human side of such a large organization. Students are placed at the UN for one day inside different departments. This event provides fantastic networking opportunities for students, and many have found mentors, internships and even employment. In the upcoming third edition of the program, some students will spend two days in a row in a given department, the first time in the program’s history that multiple days will be spent at the UN.

“I think the UN feels a responsibility to make sure they have an exciting day, I envy some of the days the students had!” said Lindenmayer. “Perhaps one day, students will be able to spend a whole week at the UN.

“I believe there is a lot of good will among UN staffers to make their Organization a little more accessible and transparent to young people… to make sure that students don’t believe that it is just a bureaucracy.”

The UNSP offers students a variety of research projects. This year’s Capstone will be on the crisis in the Sahel. Past projects have included: the role of peacekeepers in electoral processes, the role of natural resources in sustainable peace in South Sudan, Management reform of the UN, and helping the UN’s Peacekeeping Operations’ ‘Best Practices and Lessons Learned’ section establish new guidelines. This was done by formally analyzing highly confidential ‘End of Mission’ reports. These Capstones included formal presentations to special representatives and peacekeepers on their findings.

“It was incredible for the students because DPKO asked us to brief all the people coming from the field on our research,” recounted Lindenmayer, referring to the ‘Best Practices’ Capstone. “I would say when you do something like this, you really feel the program is making a meaningful contribution.”

Another pillar of the UNSP is bringing students directly to the field. Going to the field with a peacekeeping mission provides a perspective that cannot be obtained through observation and theory alone.

“No book can explain what the field is, and all the challenges of a peacekeeping operation on the ground. Students...
**FROM THE SECURITY COUNCIL TO SIPA:**

**Professor Lindenmayer Explains Her Motivations**

**For Choosing a Career in Peacekeeping**

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**Q:** Why did you choose to come to SIPA after leaving the UN?

**EL:** I wanted to give back and invest in young people. I thought that after close to 30 years of practice, I had something to share. I think that students enjoy the experience, but they also welcome practitioners who can tell them that, in spite of all the humanitarian crises, the cynicism of the political world and the pitfalls and vagaries of bureaucracy, they still believe in the ideal and mission of the UN Charter. I think this is an important message.

**Q:** What is your background compelled you to serve at the UN for so long?

**EL:** I was born in Africa. I lived in Africa and in many other parts of the world during my childhood. Growing up, I found myself in the middle of the two wars: the war in Indochina, and the war in Algeria. If you see war at a very early age you either get engaged or you look the other way, but it cannot leave you indifferent. I decided to get engaged, and that really shaped my destiny. I came to the UN with a very strong motivation to work for peace. My past inspired and shaped my career. It continues to inspire me at SIPA. Nothing has and nothing will take this inspiration away from me. It is something very deep, a kind of passion for humanity that I try to share with students.

**Q:** What is there something inherent in a human's personality where you can tell, ‘this student will make a good peacekeeper?’

**EL:** Not really. Life is dynamic; People change, grow and evolve. I have seen students change in the course of their two years at SIPA and find their niche in unexpected places. No matter what, choosing to dedicate your life to humanitarian work will require a great deal of commitment, resiliency and a true passion for humankind. I feel there is so much of that among some of the students involved in the activities of the UNSP! It is just a question of providing the exposure, and helping the spark to ignite. The important thing is to provide students with the inspiration and the skills they need should they choose this path. I can only hope that the UNSP will help them to decide.

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**Professor Lindenmayer with refugees in the Balkans. Photo courtesy of: Elisabeth Lindenmayer**

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IMAGES FROM THE INSIDE

Compiled By: Annie Waldman

Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer and SIPA students pose with the North Korean military officer who led their tour of the DMZ.

Locals riding their bicycles leisurely along the Sariwon Folk Street on a sunny day - Sariwon.

TaeYoung Kim, a Canadian SIPA student of South Korean origin, poses with his North Korean guide, Mr. Kim, in front of the Arch of Reunification (조국통일 3대한정 기념탑) with a shared hope of reunification of the two Koreas - Pyongyang.
A GLIMPSE AT NORTH KOREA

Statues at the Mansudae Grand Monument (만수대 동상) depicting North Korean people who fought against what they perceived as "Imperialist Americans" during the Korean War - Pyongyang.

SIPA trip participants pose for a picture with North Korean students in their classroom at the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST/평양과학기술대학교) - Pyongyang.

SIPA trip participants visited Songdowon International Children's Union Camp (송도원 국제 소년단 아영소).
Students Share Impressions at ‘A First Glimpse of North Korea’

By Sarah Goldman

(Cont. Page 1)

Pyongyang airport, who explained that one of the ironic perks of living under the country’s iron-fist rule is that he and his family never felt safer.

Kayoko Ajlani (MIA ’12) explained how, despite hostilities between her home country Japan and North Korea, she felt “really at home.”

Commentary from Professors Jeong Ho Roh, Director of the Center for Korean Research at Columbia Law School, and Charles Armstrong, Director of the Center for Korean Research at Columbia University, both who have traveled to North Korea, followed the student panel.

Professor Roh reflected on the serious problems facing the new leader Kim Jong-un in control of his country. Professor Armstrong chose to expand on the “logic and rationality to the DPRK,” pointing out that the country has already lasted longer than the USSR. He commented that North Korea “is not as isolated as we tend to think,” and has in fact established relations with most countries besides the U.S. and Japan.

After answering questions, the student panelists and professors had a chance to interact with audience members in a reception immediately after the event.

Professor Armstrong expressed his hope that this trip would be “only the beginning of a dialogue between Columbia and North Korea.”

Having never visited North Korea before, Lindenmayer wanted the opportunity to just listen to the people and “see the interests of students in understanding how the regime works… how it stays in power.”

Samir Ashraf (MIA ’13) left North Korea with more questions than when he came. “I can’t say that I got answers to the human and political side of things,” he said.

“I still wonder what life is like for the workers we saw. Where do they live? It’s impossible to know from what we have seen.”

Still, a glimmer of hope came in the warm connection he made with his North Korean tour guide, who bid him adieu at the end of the trip and said, “When I come to New York, I want you to be my guide.”

An Unprecedented Voyage

15 Students Explore Isolated North Korea in First-Ever Trip Sponsored By an American University

By Sarah Goldman

“Daniel Emory and Alana Ngoh contributed to the article

Last May, 15 SIPA students, led by United Nations Studies Program (UNSP) director Elisabeth Lindenmayer, embarked on a trip to the Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea (DPRK), the first-ever endorsed by an American university. The trip was co-sponsored by the UNSP and SIPA’s Conflict Resolution Working Group (CRWG).

The group travelled around North Korea for six days, spending a majority of the time in Pyongyang, but also visiting other cities, rural areas and the Demilitarized Zone. One memorable night even included a trip to a North Korean amusement park. The entire trip, the students were closely monitored and permanently accompanied by two guides and a driver.

The inspiration for the trip came from Tae Young Kim (MIA ’13), who sought a way to link his personal passions to his academic interests.

“My background is in East Asian studies, and I just had this urge to rediscover my passions and do something different,” TaeYoung said. “I really wanted to immerse myself in a challenging project that would leave me inspired for a few more years.”

After connecting with a SIPA graduate who had been to North Korea twice as a South Korean journalist, Kim approached Professor Lindenmayer, along with co-chairs of the CRWG Pushkar Sharma (MIA ’13) and Tarik Carney (MIA ’13), to ask her to lead a trip to the country. Lindenmayer has a history of taking students on trips abroad. She explained, “if students are really interested in something, you will not see me say no.”

After Lindenmayer’s consent and presentations to administration officials, the proposed trip became the first-ever sponsored by an American university. SIPA and the UNSP supported the trip financially, and the organizers worked with Uri Tours to plan the logistics of the trip.

Challenges of planning a trip to North Korea included submitting the names of every individual with whom the group was meeting and creating a list of every electronic device being brought into the country. For the students, Lindenmayer “opened up the doors of the UN for them” by arranging meetings with various UN offices and granting them access to UN documents for further research and analysis on a country that still remains a mystery to many.

For Lindenmayer, the multi-faceted nature of the North Korean issue, with humanitarian, political, and economic components, made it a perfect opportunity for SIPA students who are “at the crossroads of so many issues.”

As a conclusion to the adventure, the students presented their findings on October 2 during ‘A First Glimpse at North Korea.’

Students Share Impressions at ‘A First Glimpse of North Korea’

By Sarah Goldman

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SIPA STUDENTS’ REACTIONS TO THE UNSP NORTH KOREA TRIP

“I have returned from the DPRK, and still cannot measure why every North Korean I have seen wears a small red pin over their heart, depicting the same image of the “Dear Leader.” Whether it is worn out of love, fear, pride, or nostalgia in remembrance of more prosperous times, I cannot say. In a country where the truth seems to exist in small hints and subtleties, rather than large gestures or rehearsed rhetoric however, it’s easy to find yourself seeking further answers in the fog.”

— Tarik Carney (MIA ’13, Jamaica).

“There is an inherent pressure to craft a memory of the DPRK that fits into the narrative Western media has created about the nation; to articulate a horrifying and trying experience. The more wrenching of an image the narrator creates the more attention the narrator commands, the more the listener feels they are hearing the ‘truth,’ and the more praise the narrator receives from the listener for having ‘survived’ a trying experience. Monsters and monstrous behavior make the most compelling (and simplest) headlines. And so it may come as a disappointment to some when I write that the biggest surprise for me in my trip to the DPRK was simply that I had fun.”

— Pushkar Sharma (MPA ’13, USA)

“As we visited the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) the stationed soldiers told us repeatedly that this was the most dangerous place in the world. And yet it was a tourist attraction, we spent several moments taking group photos, and the western tourists in front of us had even brought their baby. It is hard to imagine that happening in Somalia or Syria.”

— Mara Ladewig (MPA ’12, USA)

“The country demonstrates an infusion of isolation, loneliness, pride, strength and resilience that are reminiscent of China’s past.”

— Jin Zhou (MIA ’13, China)

“On the road outside Pyongyang, I saw a Korea similar to the province my mother had been raised in the south. On the foot of the mountains and on either side of the road our bus travelled on, there were farmland for rice paddies and other crops. There were a number of people traveling on foot between the roads connecting cities and children roaming in groups unaccompanied. No field was left unattended to by the laborers who were heavily represented by the elderly population.”

— Sandra Choi (MIA ’13, USA)
What is the Future of the MDGs?
Netherlands Ambassador Herman Schaper Asks the UNSP

By Sarah Goldman

The Ambassador of the Netherlands, Herman Schaper, extended his hospitality to 14 SIPA students on Thursday, November 15, welcoming them to his private east side residence for a United Nations Study Program (UNSP) Working Lunch. UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer organized the event, the second Working Lunch to be hosted by the Ambassador.

Sitting around a long dining room table with breathtaking views of the East River, the students listened intently to Ambassador Schaper’s opening insights on sustainable development and the relationship between donor and recipient states.

The students were so engaged in his words that the first course of quinoa salad sat untouched for several minutes. At one point, the Ambassador stopped and invited the students to eat. “There is an essential rule at the UN... the moment you get food in front of you, you start eating!” the Ambassador joked.

With the ambient sounds of silverware and cutlery now accompanying his remarks, the Ambassador elaborated on his opening comments, particularly on the difficulty of defining and obtaining development objectives.

“The issue of sustainability is by definition nearly global,” said the Ambassador. “It is very difficult to say ‘sustainable development’ and have sustainability objectives.”

The current shift in thinking at the United Nations is toward common interest, rather than the traditional North-South divide that dominated debates for much of the organization’s history. “The UN was not originally based on the notion of North-South,” the Ambassador noted. However, the composition of the General Assembly and the formation of blocks such as the Non-Aligned Movement contributed to the prominence of this paradigm. Given the common North-South interest of many development goals, Schaper wondered if this framework is still the best approach to problem solving.

He acknowledged that this question is sensitive in nature, particularly among smaller nations that are empowered by the Non-Aligned Movement and G77. He pondered if regional groups, such as the African Group, would play a more prominent role in the future for these smaller states. Professor Lindenmayer echoed the Ambassador’s statements. “We don’t have the kind of black and white division that we used to see between North and South” she said, noting that Switzerland is just as affected as Bangladesh by issues such as climate change.

Once this framework for analysis is developed, the Ambassador continued, the next challenge is how to obtain development goals. He stated how defining goals for security and human rights, two preeminent issues of development, is much harder than the specific, quantifiable Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

“What do we do after 2015?” he asked. “For a successful, durable, sustainable development, you need a much broader approach.” He cited that many fragile states failed to achieve the MDGs because of a lack of security and unstable governments.

“Peace is a triangle which requires security as well as human rights and development,” added Lindenmayer.

As a donor government, the Netherlands is particularly interested in the extent to which its contributions lead to good governance. “[Donor countries] have spent a lot of money on a lot of projects where the money has disappeared into the pockets of those in power without having any real effect on the ground,” he said. This discrepancy raises questions about ways donor countries can increase the effectiveness of their contributions.

During the second course of branzino with fennel and rösti, and dessert of (Cont. Page 14)
A Conversation on Challenges: Ambassador Nishida, UNSP Discuss in Japan’s First-Ever Working Lunch

By Jiayu Chen and Farha Tahera Quadri

On October 5, Ambassador Tsuneo Nishida, the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, hosted a Working Lunch for Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer, Director of the United Nations Study Program (UNSP), and 19 SIPA students at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN. The Ambassador treated the guests to delectable Japanese cuisine and detailed insight into whether the international community can address the threats of the 21st century in an integrated manner.

Mr. Nishida painted a picture of a UN facing a set of new challenges. The nature of world conflicts is different and the key players have changed from nation-states to non-state actors. In addition, the UN is shifting its focus from national security to human security; the security of the individual’s access to education, health and a sustainable livelihood.

“A bottom-up approach, a compassionate reaching out to the individual in poverty will better define the UN’s role,” he remarked. Ambassador Nishida also discussed the decision-making challenges within the UN structure. The organization tries to work through consensus, but consensus often means compromise. The UN has to choose either a radical package of actions with limited countries’ approval, or a compromised one with broader support.

Funding is another key issue. Japan and the United States are the top two financial contributors to the UN, and both are facing economic difficulties. Japan’s population is aging, putting a heavy burden on government expenditures. Also, it is still dealing with the aftermath of the tsunami disaster. These strains come on top of the inevitable and expensive investments in technological innovation and military expenditure.

Professor Lindenmayer pointed out that Japan has no seat on the Security Council yet it is the second highest financial contributor. Federico Brusa (MPA ’13) asked if the G20 could serve as a model for the Security Council. The Ambassador responded that the G20 could not replace the Security Council because they have different agendas. The two organizations, however, should strengthen their collaboration, and the Security Council should undergo long-overdue reforms.

Sonya Kuki (MIA ’14) inquired about the pacifying potential of nuclear power. Ambassador Nishida replied that nuclear power has to be taken on a case-by-case basis, because it depends on whether one trusts the state in possession of nuclear weapons. Japan is a major advocate of transparency frameworks to ensure that nuclear weapons do not fall into the wrong hands.

When asked about Japan’s active participation in securing a permanent seat on the Security Council, the Ambassador remarked that permanent member privileges, such as the veto power, are so patently unfair that there is a danger that the UN may lose its legitimacy and the world may splinter off into regional blocks. The Security Council should have broader representation, and the voices of countries such as Japan, Germany, Brazil and India should be heard.

The territorial dispute between Japan and China, Japan’s role in post-war Afghanistan and the regulation of international seas were among the other topics discussed.

As a concluding remark, Professor Lindenmayer suggested that generating new international norms should be part of the work of SIPA students when they embark on their professional careers. Echoing the Professor’s sentiments, Ambassador Nishida declared that SIPA students are stakeholders in the future.

The Ambassador stated that he enjoyed the time spent with future policymakers, and hoped that similar events would be held again in the near future.

“A bottom-up approach, a compassionate reaching out to the individual in poverty will better define the UN’s role”
Students Talk Turkish Diplomacy with Ambassador Apakan

By Max Marder and Julie Nacos

On Monday, October 1, Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Turkey to the United Nations, graciously welcomed 20 SIPA students to his private Manhattan residence.

Accompanied by Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer, Director of the United Nations Studies Program (UNSP), the future world leaders enjoyed an afternoon discussing global affairs and Turkish diplomacy. Ambassador Apakan shared his experiences in the Foreign Service while the students and diplomats alike enjoyed an exquisite meal of grape leaves, stuffed eggplant, phyllo pastries and baklava.

The Ambassador generously volunteered his time for the event despite his turbulent diplomatic schedule in the midst of the United Nations General Assembly and his impending departure from New York.

The Ambassador opened the discussion with an insightful summary of contemporary global affairs. He spoke of the rise of Asia and the dawning of a multipolar era in international affairs. The Ambassador discussed Europe’s 21st century challenges but expressed confidence that Europe would overcome its difficulties, most notably by incorporating Mediterranean countries more robustly within its framework.

“Turkey’s future is with Europe,” he summarized. “Geopolitics is important for the Turks,” the Ambassador said, highlighting Turkey’s unique location at the cross-section of Europe, Asia and Africa. “Turkey’s fidelity is equal to the East and the West.”

Ambassador Apakan explained that Turkey had to forgo its policy of “zero problems with neighbors” because of changes in the region, particularly with recent events in Syria. He underlined that the situation with Iran must be resolved politically and diplomatically, not militarily.

He also expressed that political progress would come to the Arab world in the next ten years if there were a proper emphasis on “respect for human rights, minority rights, democracy and the rule of law.”

In addition, Ambassador Apakan highlighted the need for political secularism in emerging Arab democracies: a separation of religion from politics. While culture and religion are “very important and underemphasized in international politics,” he believes secularism allows for problem solving through science and reason. He urged fledgling democracies to achieve balance through remembering individual and unique histories and cultures.

Knowledge of the craft of diplomacy and the ability to empathize and understand another state’s viewpoint are elements of the “beauty of diplomacy,” the Ambassador offered. Attention to detail is critical, along with identifying common apprehensions. The Ambassador advised future diplomats to have “hope in resolving the problems around you.”

Lastly, Ambassador Apakan stressed that diplomacy requires patience, optimism and farsightedness.

“Some countries look 40 years into the future, 100 years into the future, or 5000 years into the future,” he said.

The Ambassador concluded by highlighting the strengths that a SIPA education provides. He expressed his wish that SIPA students go on to create skilled dialogue and initiatives for “future peace and stability within regions.”

UNSP Students Witness History at First-Ever Security Council Meeting on ICC

By Eric Bohnenstiel and Alex Fankuchen


The title may sound routine, but the meeting was quite exceptional. Despite the highly complementary functions of the UN and International Criminal Court (ICC), it was the first time since the ICC’s creation in 2002 that the court held an open meeting within the Security Council to address current state issues.

Underscoring the exceptional nature of the meeting, the President of the ICC, Sang-Hyun Song, was invited for the first time to speak formally to the Security Council. ICC representatives have presented to the Council in the past, however this was the first time Song himself took the floor.

Adding to this historic scene was the Presidency of Guatemala itself. A founding member of the United Nations, Guatemala never before served as President of the Security Council. Adding significance to this is the fact that the country is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement; Guatemala’s presidency can be seen as a sign of the movement’s growing relevance within the UN. It was Guatemala’s decision to bring the ICC to the forefront of the Security Council, prioritizing the court in an unprecedented way.

With SIPA students viewing this historic meeting from the gallery above, representatives of the Security Council conducted a brisk debate, moderated by the Guatemalan President of the Security Council, Harold Caballeros.

“When it comes to peace and justice, we are living in a new world,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated to open the discussion.

(Cont. Page 12)
How Would You Handle a Crisis?

Students Confront Hard Decisions During UNSP Syrian Crisis Simulation

By Florian Dautil

It’s 2:00 am on Thursday, November 15, and a long, long meeting is coming to an end in a collective sigh of relief. Eight hours earlier, 21 students started a challenging and unique experience: a simulation of an emergency meeting of the Security Council in light of recent indication that the Government of Syria was about to use chemical weapons against its own people. While the scenario was fictitious, it required extensive research on the part of the students to understand the crisis in Syria and prepare their roles.

Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer, Director of the United Nations Studies Program (UNSP), designed this simulation to be a meaningful exercise for the students of her class reader Seisei Tatebe-Goddu, and the conference officials who attended the simulation, including them such an opportunity that was critically useful resources as the students walked their way through a mindboggling experience.

On Wednesday, at 6:00 pm, the meetings started. In a series of opening speeches, each country articulated its position on the situation. Clear and traditional divisions, especially among the permanent members, quickly emerged and set the mood of the negotiations. After a more than 2 hours of negotiations, progress was slow and positions were entrenched. In the room, some ambassadors started to silently wonder if the Council was heading to another stalemate.

In the middle of the meeting, a game-changing element came in the form of an Al-Jazeera press release confirming that the Government of Syria had just resorted to the use of chemical weapons against its civilian population. Thirty minutes later, more breaking news arrived: The opposition had also used chemical weapons, this time against members of the Government of Syria. This further complicated the situation, and made it impossible to continue the meeting on the same basis.

After a break, the P5 held a separate consultation on the new developments and all the other and expression became the object of fierce negotiations. As time passed by, these negotiations turned into an endurance test, a genuine trial of strength led by the P5. After midnight, and under the masterful presidency of India, the outlines of a compromise began to appear. All members proved ready to move beyond their comfort zone in order to hammer out a compromise.

At 1:45 am on Thursday morning, the resolution was put in blue and voted upon. The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favor, two abstentions and zero against.

After the meeting ended, it was everybody’s opinion that the simulation had been a success.

“As a representative of China, I was able escape from conventional wisdom by thinking and arguing from different perspective I had before, which gave me intuition about international problem solving mechanism,” said Cheong Ju Kim.

“The potentially hostile environment of the contact group and the unwavering priorities of individual members of the Security Council facilitated an environment that required me to think outside the box,” remarked Caitlin Mollica, who played the dual roles of the EU High Representative and the UN Secretary General.

As a different note, meetings for 8 hours in a row, under significant pressure, was a physical challenge, which in itself was an integral part of the simulation, and whose shock waves were felt in the following days.

All the students were tremendously grateful to Professor Lindenmayer, her class reader Seisei Tatebe-Goddu, and the UNSP officials who attended the simulation, for offering them such an opportunity that will remain among the highlights of their experience at SIPA.

Consultations among the P5s after the first breaking news. Photo courtesy of: Elisabeth Lindenmayer

The Security Council is put to vote. Photo courtesy of: Elisabeth Lindenmayer

For more information, visit http://www.sipa.columbia.edu/academics/concentrations/unsp/
UN Under-Secretary-General Abdelaziz

By Mohammed Ademo

If the 41 SIPA students who attended this year’s United Nations Studies Program (UNSP) Working Retreat learned one thing, it was this: managing the challenges of political transitions is extraordinarily complicated, especially when these complex situations are discussed in the living, breathing, overtly political organization that is the United Nations.

This thought isn’t limited to future world leaders; UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Advisor on Africa Maged Abdelaziz, the keynote speaker at the retreat, agreed.

That’s why he began his remarks to the students by explaining the structure of the UN, the political blocks such as the Non-Aligned Movement and G77, and the regional groupings within the General Assembly: Africa, Asia, Latin, Western Europe, and other groups.

Except on key issues like elections and peace building initiatives, “the work of the United Nations is not done geographically... It is done between alliances and what we call the political groups,” said Abdelaziz. This underscores the political nature of the organization, and must be addressed in any successful negotiation.

Using this as a framework, Ambassador Abdelaziz’s talk covered a wide range of issues including Syria, the working methods of the Security Council, the need to reform the UN, the use of veto, and the behind scenes politicking for more regional representation in the Council.

“The security council doesn’t present a good governance system at the international level,” said Abdelaziz. “It has to be reformed...the same applies to the General Assembly.”


By Sarah Goldman

Thirty-two lucky students will get to call the United Nations their office, visiting the organization as part of the highly popular program, ‘A Day at the United Nations: A View From Inside - Third Edition.’

It is the first time since the program’s creation that some students will be spending two consecutive days at the UN.

Over 75 students applied for the invaluable opportunity to network with and learn from professionals at the organization. Interest in the program was especially impressive given that the application’s initial due date fell during Superstorm Sandy, which wreaked havoc on Internet and electricity connections across Manhattan.

Starting in 2013, students will be placed in one of the following UN offices: Office of the Secretary General, Peacekeeping, Political Affairs, Mediation, the Security Council, Support of the Peace Building Commission, The Global Compact, the Office of Economic and Social Affairs, Public Information, the Office of Legal Affairs, UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, and UNFPA and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Students will shadow a UN staff member as he or she participates in meetings, briefings, teleconferences with the field, and other activities. The goal of the program is to have the students gain insider access to the organization, and get a sense of what a typical day looks like. It also provides a human face to an organization often associated with bureaucracy.

Historically, ‘A Day at the United Nations: A View From Inside’ has served as a launching point for mentorships and internships for SIPA students with the UN. The participants will present their takeaways at a panel scheduled for April 10, 2013 at 6:00 PM in room 1501.

UNSP Attends Historic Security Council Meeting

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“We live in an age of accountability.”

President Song stressed the recent success of the ICC, with seven cases currently being addressed, two of which were referred by the Security Council and another three referred by states themselves.

“The ICC is fully functioning at all levels,” he observed before the commencement of the general discussion.

Discussion ranged from a variety of shared objectives to the concerns regarding the relationship between the Security Council and the ICC. Several representatives opined that sources of funding threatened the legitimacy of the ICC as an independent legal body. The German representative, Peter Wittig, felt strongly that funding for the ICC be borne by the UN, with no “free ride” in the pursuit of justice.

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United States Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, voiced that preventing national atrocities and genocide is at the heart of the Rome Statute.

“We will not accept the false choice between the interests of justice and the Interests of peace,” Ambassador Rice stated. (Cont. Page 14)
Student Teams Tackle Transitions

Somalia Team Wins Lunch With Deputy Secretary General

By Doyeun Kim

On the weekend of September 15, 41 students traveled to the beautiful Guest House Retreat Center in Chester, Connecticut, for the second annual United Nations Studies Program (UNSP) Working Retreat. The tranquil, idyllic country scenery was juxtaposed against the heavy topic of the weekend: challenges of countries in transition.

Cases in Libya, Syria, Mali and Somalia were examined through the two-day conversation with UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer and seven distinguished guests from the United Nations and the International Peace Institute (IPI).

Joining the students at the retreat were: Francesco Mancini, Director of Research at IPI; Youssef Mahmoud, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Chad and Burundi and currently Senior Adviser at IPI; David Haeri, Chief of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Best Practices Section; Denise O’Brien, Senior Officer for North Africa at the UN Department of Political Affairs; Mireille Affa’a Mindzie, Senior Policy Analyst in the Africa program at IPI; and Marc Jacquand, who has worked as Strategic Planning Adviser at the UN Office for the Middle East Peace Process, all experts in their field and long-time friends and former colleagues of Professor Lindenmayer.

Following presentations from the speakers, students divided into groups centered around each of the four case study countries and a fifth focusing specifically on the criteria for successful political transitions. Their goal was to research and examine the challenges these countries faced and the role the UN could play, and to present their findings and viable recommendations on these countries to the rest of the retreat attendees.

The panel of professionals judged the presentations, provided constructive advice, and finally presented a winning team. The Somalia working group, after hours of preparation and hard work, earned a lunch with UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson to their great surprise and excitement.

Yingci Sun (MPA-DP ’14) said the case competition was her favorite part of the retreat, that it was inspiring to work with people from diverse concentrations of study.

“The combination of [people outside security studies] just showcases how international peace problems are addressed in the real policy world.”

Asking if she would change anything for next year’s working retreat, Sun said, “There is something you can’t change: the food!”

Following a delicious three-course meal on the first evening, the UNSP welcomed Under-Secretary-General Maged Abdelaziz, former Permanent Representative of Egypt to the UN and Special Adviser on Africa, who graciously traveled from New York to the Guest House for the evening. He shared his thoughts on the UN’s role in assisting countries in transition and addressed thoughtful questions from the students.

While discussing the crises and current transitions in the Middle East and Africa, students sought to delineate not only the role of the UN but also the roles of national, regional and other international actors. There were complex questions to consider, recognizing the different context and interests of each country.

What transpired from the symposium is that priorities varied and sequencing solutions mattered; One would have to (Cont. Page 14)

Talks Block Politics at Fall UNSP Retreat

and related issues.

“While civilian protection is at the heart of UN’s work, the Security Council ultimately has the final say on interventions,” Abdelaziz said.

The Under-Secretary-General’s comments reinforced comments made earlier in the day by the other guest speakers, who offered their first-hand experiences of critical issues on transitions in Syria, Libya, Somalia and Mali.

Francesco Mancini, senior director of research at the International Peace Institute (IPI), presented six “megatrends” common among fragile states: demography, environment, economic power, social tensions, technology and geopolitical imbalance.

According to Mancini, rapid population growth in fragile states has led to an expanding youth bulge and rapid urbanization, while mobile connectivity, resources scarcity [such as water], and horizontal inequality among ethnic groups have reinforced discontent with the status quo leading to the Arab Spring. Non-state actors such as Facebook and Twitter play an enormous role in mass mobilization.

But how are bureaucratic establishments, much less governments and the UN, keeping up?

The speed of change in today’s interconnected world makes it difficult, Mancini acknowledged.

“The UN is a story of continuity as much as it’s been a story of change,” said UNSP Program Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer.

David Haeri, chief of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations’ Best Practices unit, focused on political life following transitions.

After revolutions, the first elections, he remarked, are often a referendum on previous regimes and there is a limited menu for models of government.

The real test in transitions is on how civil society and civilian rule should be organized. But what should be done before this moment, while the conflict is still raging?

“What do you do when citizens rise up against their government?” mused Youssef Mahmoud, senior advisor at IPI, while speaking about the current crisis in Syria. “What if they are armed?”

“What happens when a dictator falls?” asked Denise O’Brien, senior Officer at the UN Department of Political Affairs. O’Brien made a case for Libya’s “transition-less transition” where institutions ranging from the military and judiciary to healthcare and finance needed bottom-up reforms.

Lindenmayer summed up the lessons of the day well. “It’s easy to bash the UN,” she said. “But it takes time to understand it and transitions are enormously complex.”
Students Talk Political Transitions at UNSP Retreat

(Cont Page 13)

decide, for instance, whether humanitarian assistance, security or economic recovery came first. Different power structures, as well as each country’s set of social issues, called for flexible transition models to address the unique problems and needs of the people at stake.

“There is a myth in my part of the world that the UN could intervene as they please,” said Houda Sahyoun (MPA-DP ’14), who is from Lebanon. During the retreat, she had been part of the working group on neighboring country Syria.

“I learned that, in fact, intervention is a complex task even if the will is there. It is not as straightforward as we would want, because many different players are coming into this game.”

Still, there were common patterns and lessons to be drawn from the different cases. Youssef Mahmoud stressed the importance of engineering legitimacy and trust in new governments, as well as the value of the private sector and entrepreneurship in providing services where the state might be absent.

Above all, a “nationally-owned transition” would be the golden nugget at the end of all deliberation. Working with local actors would be of essence in arriving at such an objective.

“Make friends with your enemies,” Professor Lindenmayer advised. “If you don’t include [them] in your negotiations, it will not work. And don’t forget women… they are important agents of change. They are the ones who will rebuild the social fabric of society.”

The guests’ expert insights on rebuilding the countries in question proved to be invaluable to the weekend’s discussions, particularly as they helped students understand the interwoven political and social elements at stake, and the long process of analysis behind each course of action.

UNSP Holds Working Lunch with Netherlands Ambassador

(Cont. Page 8)

smooth mascarpone mousse with fruit, Ambassador Schaper answered questions from students ranging from whether conditions should be placed on funding development, to ways the UN can empower local groups to institute change.

One question even addressed how the Netherlands, with its long history of effective water management, can assist states facing new dangers of flooding as a result of climate change, a particularly timely question given the catastrophic effects of Superstorm Sandy on parts of the tri-state area.

The Ambassador passed around magnets enumerating the MDGs in his native Dutch as a parting gift for the students. He thanked them for a “brilliant discussion.” On behalf of all the students, Professor Lindenmayer expressed her warm appreciation to Ambassador Schaper for his wonderful hospitality and extended him the invitation to come to SIPA for a high-level panel in the future.

UNSP Attends First-Ever Security Council Meeting on the ICC

(Cont. Page 12)

Representatives from China and India, while not signatories to the Rome Statute, expressed their concerns over the “respect of national sovereignty” and the “selectivity, partiality and double standards,” with which the ICC approaches its mandate.

The representative from Pakistan, Masood Khan, remained hesitant regarding the execution of the ICC mandate.

“Justice should not be reduced to punishment,” he reflected.

“Restorative justice is more effective when it is not externally imposed.”

Though different member states had substantial differences of opinion as to the extent and appropriateness of the ICC’s mandate, all representatives present expressed support for its essential mission.

Preneet Kaur, the representative from India, summed up the meeting with this sentiment.

“There is no peace without justice, there is no justice without peace.”

The UNSP has an exciting lineup for the Spring Semester! Look for details in the upcoming months on the following events:

A Conversation with Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliason January 30 at 6:00 PM (Room 1501)

Speaker Panel and Events for International Women’s Day March 6, 2013


Working Lunch with the Ambassador of Belgium TBD