**SIPA GETS A SEAT AT THE UN**

By Caelainn Hogan

Amid the vibrant pulse of the 68th UN General Assembly in downtown New York, 64 students of Columbia’s UN Studies Program (UNSP) had the privilege to join an audience of high-ranking officials and heads of state at the Vienna+20 high-level side event on September 25. The agenda: “Human Rights Achievements, Shortcomings, and the Way Forward.”

One lucky SIPA student, Rina Lila (MIA ‘15), had the chance to join UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer and represent Columbia University at the main table, along with the other discussants. Lindenmayer choose Lila for an opportunity of a lifetime: the opportunity to serve as the face of SIPA students and ask a question to the panel.

Lila, who was born and raised in Kosovo, lived through the war in her country and remembers in 1999 when, at age 11, she greeted UN troops with flowers as they arrived in her hometown of Pristina.

Given the unique opportunity to represent Columbia at the event, before taking her seat on the bustling floor of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) room, Lindenmayer and Lila were greeted warmly, shaking hands with the distinguished speakers of the panel.

The side event focused on issues such as building human rights as the “third pillar” of UN action, development, and peace & security. It also addressed the challenges of championing human rights within the constraints of the current UN structure on financial, political and institutional levels. It featured keynote addresses from UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and Austrian President Heinz Fischer.

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"Day(s) at the UN" Preview
See Page 3 for More Information

Former SIPA student Mohammed Ademo spends the day at the DPA East Africa Division.

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**“UNSP PROMOTES TEACHING, TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE PURSUIT OF MULTILATERAL SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL DILEMMAS. THE PROGRAM STRENGTHENS SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE COLUMBIA COMMUNITY AND THE UNITED NATIONS.”**

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...AND MORE!
USG Angela Kane Discusses Syria Chemical Weapons Disarmament with UNSP

By Caelainn Hogan and Michael Lenihan

On Monday, October 28, the United Nations Studies Program (UNSP) hosted UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Angela Kane for an insightful discussion about the UN’s role in disarming Syria’s chemical weapons. Under Secretary-General (USG) Kane visited SIPA at the invitation of UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer.

Speaking to an audience of nearly 200 students, USG Kane, one of the few female peace negotiators at the UN and the first woman in her current position, held a Davos-style conversation with Professor Lindenmayer, which was followed by a question-and-answer session with students.

USG Kane recounted her experience as chief negotiator on global issues involving chemical weapons and reflected on her distinguished career at the UN. Her previous posts have included USG for Management, USG for General Assembly and Conference Management, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Director of the Department of Political Affairs.

USG Kane provided a detailed description of the UN’s effort to test for chemical weapons in Syria. In addition to the basic logistical challenges posed by field research—such as selecting testing sites, coordinating examinations, storing samples in extreme desert heat—the Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) faced the historic challenge of negotiating access during a civil war.

“[earlier in the summer], you had sporadic shelling, but the second time [with the team], it was a lot closer and more frequent,” she recalled. Since one of the test sites was in a rebel-controlled area, USG Kane was also responsible for negotiating the team’s access and coordinating a three-hour long cease-fire on the spot.

Once evidence was collected and analyzed by UNODA researchers, along with staff from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)—which recently accepted the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize—USG Kane’s team published their initial findings on the August 21 attacks that killed an estimated 1200 civilians. In accordance with the UN’s mandate, the report does not identify who was responsible for using the weapons, although USG Kane argued, “The conclusions can be drawn by themselves.”

Going forward, the plans to disarm Syria’s chemical arsenal—to which the Syrian government agreed—will be one challenge, but disposing of the estimated 1,000 tonnes of chemical material will be a mammoth feat. The OPCW and UNODA are looking to other countries to accept the material and take the responsibility of destroying it, a high-cost and high-risk procedure. Norway has agreed to accept and destroy a large amount thus far.

Under the Chemical Weapons Convention, USG Kane reminded, the transport of such material outside of a country is completely forbidden. “There is no protocol for handing it over, who’s responsible, who signs it off at the port and how we will negotiate through checkpoints,” she explained. The Syrian government is responsible for the safety of materials inside Syria and has demanded the material only be transported through the port of Latakia.

USG Kane said the only way such a mission would be through a “coalition of the willing” and a joint UNODA–OPCW mission, with volunteer contributors safeguarding the convoys, preventing attempts to capture the material and ensuring safe passage to its destination.

The transportation of such volatile and potentially lethal material amid a raging civil war and through rebel-held checkpoints is a highly complex mission, the scope of which has never before been attempted.

Yet USG Kane continued to emphasize that even if the disarmament is successfully achieved in Syria, solving the issue of chemical weapons will in no bring an end to the conflict or stem the numbers of Syrians being killed by conventional weapons.

“There is no protocol for handing [chemical weapons] over, who’s responsible, who signs it off at the port, and how we will negotiate through checkpoints.”
UNSP Announces Fourth Edition of “A Day at the United Nations”
Record Student Interest in Competitive Program

By Sarah Goldman

Thirty-five lucky SIPA students will get to call the United Nations their office for the day for the fourth edition of the United Nations Studies Program (UNSP)’s “A Day at the United Nations: A View from the Inside.” Over 105 students—a record turnout—vied for a spot in the selective program, which includes shadowing UN staffers at various departments and agencies, attending meetings and briefings, and teleconferences with the field.

The goal of the program is to have SIPA students gain insider access to an organization often associated with bureaucracy. “A Day at the United Nations” gives students the invaluable opportunity to network and learn directly from professionals about their roles at the UN.

The application process included a personal statement on why students want to participate in “A Day at the United Nations,” and which agencies or departments they wished to observe.

Examples of desired placements include the Office of the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the Office of Disarmament Affairs, the Office of Public Information, the Office of Legal Affairs, UN Women, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Each selected student will spend at least one day at his or her assigned UN office. Last year, some students spent up to four days at their placement.

Historically, “A Day at the United Nations: A View from the 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 Monday, April 28, 2014 at 6:00 PM in Room 1501 of the International Affairs Building.

Former participants of “A Day at the United Nations” get accustomed to their respective observation assignments. Photos courtesy of UNSP.
Syria Simulation Brings the Security Council to SIPA

By Pallavi Sekhri, Daniel Emory, and Lexi Britton

What would the international community do if there were another chemical weapons attack in Syria? How could Security Council members work together to avoid further escalation of the Syrian conflict? These were some of the questions that 24 SIPA students set out to answer in an educational simulation exercise organized by UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer in her course on Wednesday, November 13.

Each student was assigned a role as either one of the 15 member-states that sit on the Council or a prominent non-member such as Syria or the Arab League, and adopted the roles of the respective permanent representatives, conducting all correspondence and meetings in the build-up to the simulation evening under their guise.

Early discussions indicated that the session would last into the morning hours, with Council members intensely debating over singular words and definitions, such as the difference between “duty” and “responsibility.” Throughout the course of the seven-plus-hour exercise, participants were tasked with hashing out a UN resolution on Syria to the satisfaction of all parties.

Professor Lindenmayer invited former SIPA students and current UN employees to assist with the simulation, who advised students on the formalities of Council procedures and suggested future actions the Council could take. Professor Lindenmayer threw some curveballs at various points in the evening, which forced various countries and alliances to reevaluate perspectives and positions. The breaking news included information that an extremist terrorist group stole chemical weapons in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons’ possession and that the Government of Syria attacked its own people—3,000 women and children—with conventional weapons.

After several grueling hours of tense and exhilarating negotiations, the mock Council unanimously passed a final resolution at 2:00am, which addressed the grave humanitarian situation in Syria, invoked economic sanctions against the extremist group who used chemical weapons under Chapter 7 and called for the participation of Bashar al-Assad and internationally recognized opposition groups at the Geneva II conference without any preconditions.

In participating in this simulation, students debated the meaning of sovereignty in the 21st century, and ultimately recognized that it does include protecting, or at the very least not directly attacking, one’s own citizens.
UNSP Attends SC Meeting on Women, Peace and Security

By Melissa Mayers and Rina Lila

“It is up to us, the member-states, to ensure that women are represented at the table. This is in the best interest of lasting peace.”

So proclaimed Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director, at an open debate at the UN Security Council on Friday, October 18, during which over 50 United Nations Studies Program (UNSP) students had a front-row seat.

The meeting, entitled “Women, Rule of Law, and Transitional Justice in Conflict-Affected Situations,” was historic in that the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2122—the first resolution in 13 years that addresses women, peace and security.

Resolution 2122 complements Resolution 1325, which in 2000 stressed the importance of women’s participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This year’s resolution addresses the barriers to implementation of Resolution 1325 and institutes stronger measures to ensure female participation at all levels of the peace and security agendas.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who joined Under Secretary-General Mlambo-Ngcuka at the open debate, acknowledged recent progress made by the UN toward this end, stating, “For the first time in history five UN peacekeeping operations are led by women: South Sudan, Liberia, Cyprus, Haiti, and Côte d’Ivoire.” The Secretary-General also mentioned his appointment earlier this year of Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, as the first female lead peace negotiator in a peace process, referring to Africa’s Great Lakes region.

“Secretary-General Ban ended his remarks by saying, “Women must be involved at every stage of an effort to ensure rule of law. […] Their voices must be heard and their rights must be protected.”

The meeting was organized by Azerbaijan—which held the Security Council presidency in October—and chaired by its permanent representative, Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev. Other high-level officials presiding were Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous and High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay.

This is UNSP’s first trip to the Security Council this year. Last year UNSP attended visited the Council twice last academic year: in the fall to witness a meeting on the relationship between the UN and the International Criminal Court and in the spring to learn about the impact and threat of terrorism in Africa.

UNSP Participates in High-Level Side Event at the UNGA

Continued from Page 1

As she soaked up the atmosphere of the UN Headquarters for the first time, Lila explained that this childhood memory is “the reason I came to Columbia and the reason why I’m studying international relations.”

In her opening address, Pillay, emphasized that as we look forward to the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda, the implementation of human rights is “one of the most important tasks facing the UN today.”

Former High Commissioners Mary Robinson and Louise Arbour both spoke passionately about the need for a greater focus on socio-economic rights, such as sexual reproductive health, and warned of the erosion of human rights norms since 9/11.

Robinson highlighted new challenges to human rights, including violations by corporations, and the crucial issue of climate justice. She highlighted the fact that 4 billion people in our world today do not have access to the rule of law.

That reality was powerfully brought home when Lila spoke movingly about her personal experience of growing up in the Kosovo. “The sole existence of Kosovo, myself my family and all Kosovo Albanians is owed to international conflict intervention,” she acknowledged.

In light of the massive challenges surrounding the humanitarian crisis in Syria, Lila questioned if the international community is better equipped today than in 1999 to protect civilians in war-torn countries, and to address the lack of political will to implement human rights norms.

Lila’s question was well received by the panel, and Columbia was even mentioned by Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson in his closing address. “Threats to international peace and security is one of the most important challenges,” he said. “I look at you, the student from Columbia, and I know prevention is the way to go.”

Students were grateful to experience the dynamism behind one of the many events taking place during the UNGA and left with the understanding that the UN is not impenetrable, but rather an instrument of all citizens of the world.
UNSP Working Lunch Series Begins for 2013–2014 Academic Year

Launched four years ago by UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer, the “Working Lunch Series with UN Ambassadors” seeks to provide SIPA students access to the current thinking of the UN’s diplomatic community, and provide ambassadors to the UN the opportunity to hear students’ views on topics of mutual concern and interest. The Working Lunches continue to strengthen the relationship between the UN and SIPA, and create an ongoing dialogue between the worlds of international politics and academia.

Turkish Ambassador Discusses Emerging Donor Countries in UNSP Working Lunch

By Rina Lila and Filip Tucek

Midterm exams and papers could not keep more than 20 enthusiastic United Nations Studies Program (UNSP) students from missing this remarkably special opportunity.

On Tuesday, October 22, Turkish Ambassador Yasar Çevik, permanent representative to the United Nations, hosted SIPA students and UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer at his private residence. The two-hour discussion was titled “Development Agenda of the UN General Assembly: An Emerging Donor Country Perspective,” and it was the latest installment in UNSP’s 2013–2014 Working Lunch Series.

Before arriving at the Ambassador’s residence, Professor Lindenmayer briefed students on Turkey’s influence among emerging countries and important role in the international system—including the UN—at large. Once they entered, students marveled at the traditional and modern Turkish artwork, statues and furniture that graced the residence.

Between a delicious three-course meal and famous Turkish coffee, Ambassador Çevik spoke about Turkey’s status as a donor state that is building and strengthening relationships with various member-states, including Least Developed Countries.

He told participants that a guiding principle in development “is for all the people in a country to develop together; to grow and prosper together; and implement the notion of rule of law in a way that we respect everyone as well as cooperate in an equal platform.”

Every student felt warmly welcomed and unique in the Ambassador’s residence as we all had a chance to greatly participate and engage in the discussions on the United Nations Development Agenda.

SIPA students were able to learn a lot about the Development Agenda of the UN General Assembly, its present structure, and how Turkey as an increasingly important partner to the developing countries can contribute to future development goals.

The International Community has come closer to the deadline for implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the lunch talk with Ambassador Çevik enabled students to better understand how each Member State can work together to design successful policies that contribute in the areas of development and security.
Swiss Ambassador Discusses Security Council Transparency in UNSP Working Lunch

By Ayawa Fiagbedzi and Laura Daniels

Swiss Ambassador Paul Seger, permanent representative to the United Nations, entered his Mission’s conference room with an air of congeniality, introduced himself to 14 SIPA students, turned to the large table filled with Swiss chocolates, and graciously told the group that the sweets “aren’t just decoration—they’re dessert! Please eat!”

This was the opening of the first United Nations Studies Program (UNSP) Working Lunch of the 2013–2014 year, which took place on Tuesday, September 10. The topic of discussion was “Towards Better Accountability, Coherence and Transparency in the Security Council.” His offer was especially generous given the busy UN negotiations surrounding the Syrian crisis and the upcoming General Assembly.

UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer, who organized the lunch, began by observing the serendipitous timing of the meeting: the Security Council’s ongoing debates regarding the Syrian crisis were a particularly opportune backdrop for SIPA students. In response to the Council’s deadlock, Ambassador Seger stressed the importance of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group, which spearheads attempts to reform the working methods of the Security Council. Launched in May of this year with Switzerland as the initial coordinator, ACT seeks to make the body more transparent and inclusive with non-Security Council members, and cohesive with regional organizations and other organs of the UN. This reform effort was undertaken against the disproportionate power from the permanent five (P5) states, which in some cases can lead to them effectively making decisions unilaterally and providing little opportunity for dialogue.

Ambassador Seger discussed the importance of early intervention as a tool of accountability. He noted that the Security Council had the political strength to further the agenda of global peace and security by imposing sanctions or placing bans on financial and trade transactions early in a crisis.

Doing so, he explained, would pressure offending states into compliance, bypassing the need for global military action. Professor Lindenmayer elegantly summarized this point by re-emphasizing that the purpose of the Security Council is to ensure “collective security.”

The Ambassador explained that the consolidation of power in the Council’s Permanent 5 (P5) states and the P5’s reluctance to reform the structure of the Council has caused other member-states to feel insignificant and adopt constructivist agendas. Ambassador Seger said this approach has “blocked our thinking” and impeded states’ ability to “genuinely compromise.”

The Ambassador spoke passionately of the need for pragmatic revisions to the Council’s structure to reflect the modern era, and the necessity of replacing nationalistic ideologies with the mindset of a cohesive international community. Ambassador Seger graciously answered all of the SIPA students’ questions with precision and candor. He encouraged students to maintain a positive outlook on the future in spite of Syria’s grim events.

The Ambassador further reminded the participants of the UN’s main pillars: to be a platform for dialogue; to set legally and politically binding standards; and to provide developmental and human assistance. He emphasized the importance of the third pillar, saying that the UN “prevents silent mortalities,” such as malnutrition and disease, on a daily basis.

Professor Lindenmayer concluded the conversation by underlining the importance of communication. Poor communication can aggravate problems at any level, whether between family members or in interstate relations. “All politics is human,” Professor Lindenmayer said. Ambassador Seger’s gracious exchange with SIPA students served as evidentiary proof of this fact.
The History of UNSP’s

Fall 2009
Ambassador Christian Wenaweser | LIECHTENSTEIN
“The ICC and the Conundrum of Peace and Justice”

Spring 2010
Ambassador Gerard Araud | FRANCE
“The Security Council Seen by a Permanent Member”
Ambassador Vanu Gopala Menon | SINGAPOR
“The G20 and UN Global Governance”
Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti | BRAZIL
“Rebuilding Haiti”
Ambassador Peter Maurer | SWITZERLAND
Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz | EGYPT
Ambassador Pedro Nunez Mosquera | CUBA
Ambassador Mohammad Khazae | IRAN
“The Responsibility to Protect: Perspectives from the Non-Aligned Movement”
Ambassador Khalid Al Nafisee | SAUDI ARABIA
“The Role of the Kingdom with Respect to the Issue of Energy Politics in the International Sphere”

Fall 2010
Ambassador Abdullah Hussain Haroon | PAKISTAN
“The Current Humanitarian Situation in Pakistan and the Role of the United Nations”
Ambassador Christian Wenaweser | LIECHTENSTEIN
“The ICC: Recent Developments”

Spring 2011
Ambassador John McNee | CANADA
“The Challenges of Peacebuilding”
Ambassador Eduardo Ulibarri | COSTA RICA
Prince Zeid Ra’ad Zeid Al Hussein | JORDAN
Ambassador Christian Wenaweser | LIECHTENSTEIN
Ambassador Vanu Gopala Menon | SINGAPOR
Ambassador Paul Seger | SWITZERLAND
“The Security Council Seen by the S-5s”
Ambassador Herman Schaper | NETHERLANDS
“The Crisis in Libya and the United Nations”
Working Lunches...

Fall 2011

Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri | INDIA
“India and the Security Council”

Fall 2012

Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan | TURKEY
“The Role of Turkey as an Emerging Power”

Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz | EGYPT
Ambassador Abdurrahman Mohamed Shalgam | LIBYA
“The Arab Uprisings: The Way Forward”

Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti | BRAZIL
“Responsibility to Protect or Responsibility While Protecting”

Ambassador Abdallah Y. Al-Mouallimi | SAUDI ARABIA

Ambassador Albert Chua | SINGAPORE
“Sustainable Development and Sustainable Democracy: Singapore’s Experience”

Spring 2013

Ambassador Jan Grauls | BELGIUM
“Reflections on Peacebuilding”

Fall 2013

Ambassador Paul Seger | SWITZERLAND
“Towards Better Accountability, Coherence and Transparency in the Security Council”

Ambassador Yasar Çevik | TURKEY
“Development Agenda of the UN General Assembly: An Emerging Donor Country Perspective”
Annual UNSP Retreat Focuses on New Drivers of Conflict

By Maggie Li and Rina Lila

The bucolic Connecticut town of Chester is often not synonymous with a multilateral organization like the UN or a summit on global challenges. But that changed on September 14 and 15 as 47 SIPA students and select special guests arrived for the fall retreat of the United Nations Studies Program (UNSP) and its working group.

The theme of the weekend was “Old Peace, New Wars: The New Drivers of Conflict.” Participants of the retreat explored how contemporary conflicts are no longer limited to sovereign borders – specifically, how states are not the only actors in international relations anymore. In the serene country setting of the Guest House, a series of panels discussed how the UN must find new tools and strategies to cope with non-state actors such as transnational criminal networks and militias. Regions of particular focus included the Middle East, Sahel, Great Lakes, East Africa, and Afghanistan/Pakistan.

“In 2013, we are at a turning point. We are not only dealing with internal conflicts,” said UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer at the start of the weekend. “We are somewhere else entirely. This retreat will help us determine what the new conflicts are today.”

“Can the UN actually do something to prevent a conflict?” Professor Lindenmayer asked students. Given the competing elements within the UN system—member-states, citizens of member-states, the secretary-general, NGOs, the Security Council, etc.—Professor Lindenmayer emphasized that, “You have to be clear which UN you’re talking about.”

Students broke up into regional teams and tried to identify the causes of conflict in their region, and what the UN is doing to assist. A distinguished group of guest speakers—UN Under Secretary-General and Special Adviser for Africa Maged Abdelaziz, Senior Advisor at the International Peace Institute (IPI) Youssef Mahmoud, Associate Director of the Center for International Cooperation Richard Gowan, Senior Director of Research at the IPI Francesco Mancini, and Director of Public Policy at the United Nations Foundation Minh-Thu Pham—was in attendance to give expert feedback and helpful insight to each student group.

Mr. Mancini, for example, outlined eight key threats to peace, ranging from corruption and lack of education to food crises and poor public health. Under Secretary-General Abdelaziz and Mr. Mahmoud also spoke about the intricacies of coping with destruction of chemical weaponry, implications of a frozen Security Council, and spillover effects of refugee populations.

Participants asked the practitioners about the future of the Syrian civil war and the role that the UN can serve amid the crisis.

Under Secretary-General Abdelaziz stressed that it all “will depend on the results of the investigation” that the UN had conducted in Syria shortly before the retreat. He also mentioned the security concerns of Syria’s neighbors. “Iran and Lebanon are objecting to any military strikes on Syria because they are in its immediate vicinity and because of long-standing political, geographical interests connected to Syria,” he noted.

Security Council reform was also discussed. Under Secretary-General Abdelaziz said, “Everyone in the UN hopes that the Security Council can be reformed and enlarged and do a better job in peace and security.” Mr. Gowan suggested that structural changes to the Security Council might even avoid Syria-related paralysis in the UN.

Students concluded the weekend grateful for the speakers’ generosity and expertise, as well as an enriching experience overall. Professor Lindenmayer wrapped up the retreat with an outline of the UNSP’s exciting activities for the 2013–2014 academic year, and had parting words of encouragement for students who aspire to work at the UN to have firm ideals and believe they can improve the world.

“You have to know who you are,” she said. “You have to have faith in humanity. If you’re not inspired by something bigger than the institution, you will be broken by the bureaucracy.”
New Challenges in Peacekeeping Discussed with USG Hervé Ladsous

By Chidimma Emelue and Maggie Li

Nineteen grateful SIPA students in the United Nations Studies Program (UNSP) spent the afternoon of Friday, November 22, learning about the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in the distinguished company of Under Secretary-General (USG) Hervé Ladsous, head of DPKO. The private discussion was organized by UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer and hosted in a spacious conference room at the UN Secretariat.

The lucky students earned the opportunity to meet with USG Ladsous after winning the workshop component of the UNSP Retreat, “Old Peace, New Wars: The New Drivers of Conflicts,” in September.

USG Ladsous graciously gave students insight into the new demands of peacekeeping operations in the 21st century. The Under Secretary-General had to postpone the originally scheduled meeting because he was called by the Secretary-General to travel to the field.

On the day of the rescheduled discussion, USG Ladsous spoke to SIPA students between other meetings that same day regarding real-time crises in the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo. That the Under Secretary-General was able to make time for UNSP made the participating students all the more appreciative of his devotion and commitments.

He expressed that now more than ever before that DPKO must deal with post-conflict situations where non-state actors play a larger role. The conflict in Mali was a notable example of this new phase of peacekeeping: USG Ladsous noted that the situation there cannot be fully resolved without taking into account transnational actors from neighboring states such as Libya and Nigeria. These actors include militant groups and trafficking cartels of arms and drugs that exacerbate the conflict.

The Under Secretary-General also discussed the impact of asymmetric and chemical attacks, and how DPKO places an emphasis on the protection of civilians. USG Ladsous said this must be a multidimensional effort that includes attracting the right people for the task and ensuring that personnel are properly trained about safety precautions for potential situations from kidnappings to shootings. “We want to give our people the best possible assets to do the job,” said the Under Secretary-General.

Developing technology’s role in peacekeeping is one of USG Ladsous’ main priorities in his role. He told students that one of DPKO’s most ambitious projects is the commissioning of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to aid the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) in its monitoring work.

Some other challenges for DPKO include the composition of uniformed personnel and the effect of government bureaucracy on the timing of DPKO deployments and interventions.

According to USG Ladsous, DPKO could benefit from peacekeepers that are more reflective of all world regions; currently, 95% of uniformed personnel are from the Global South and the Under Secretary-General told students he would like to see more involvement from states in the Northern Hemisphere.

With regards to the challenges posed by high amounts of bureaucracy, USG Ladsous highlighted the conflict in the Central African Republic. He observed that the situation there “seems to be worsening to a ‘pre-genocide’ phase” and said that DPKO “is in the process of transitioning control of the conflict to the African Union by the December deadline. This transition could pose a threat to maintaining peace in the region since the United Nations currently does not have more effective standby arrangements for immediate deployment of peacekeepers.”

Students also had the opportunity ask USG Ladsous many questions, including some about peacekeeper accountability and the political nature of peacekeeping. Just as the international community came to a consensus about the use of highly contested UAVs, and with more countries of the European Union contributing to DPKO in significant ways, USG Ladsous is certain that the United Nations will continue to work to address these complex challenges in every way possible.
By Camilo Lizarralde

What a way to spend the final academic day of the semester.

In spite of the snow and hail, eight students trekked from SIPA to the UN on December 9. After waiting for a half hour in the snow, they entered the Chamber of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to attend the event “Realizing a Vision for Transformative Development.” The invitation, secured by UNSP Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer, celebrated the launch of a report commissioned by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the 25-year history of the United Nations (UN) and the right to development. Beforehand, the students got exclusive access to the Delegates Lounge, where everyday diplomacy transpires.

The UN publication is a compilation of studies and in-depth analyses from 30 international experts covering the framework, significance and application of this right and the potential to shape human rights and development policy and practice.

Ivan Šimonović, UN Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Human Rights, presided over the meeting with his welcoming remarks. He noted the absence of many member-states and UN officials, who were in South Africa for the funeral of former President Nelson Mandela. ASG Šimonović marked the importance of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development, which was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1986.

But ASG Šimonović then issued a call to action for governments to provide fair and universal access to development. He warned: “Regrettably, economic growth overshadowed development. Globalization superseded development and human rights became submerged.

The consequences included unacceptable levels of poverty and the rise of inequality, interconnected threats, challenges and an ecological habitat that have crossed the tolerance threshold of nature.”

A panel of human-rights experts followed ASG Šimonović’s remarks and discussed how governments, NGOs, the private sector, and civil society must seize the opportunity to focus on the implementation and execution of the Declaration. Panelists presented alarming figures about growing income inequality worldwide—for instance, the poorest 69 percent of the global population has only 3 percent of the wealth, and only 0.6 percent of the population possesses 41 percent of the wealth.

In many ways, the best item on the agenda was saved for last. When conference organizers opened the final 20 minutes of the session for comments and questions from the audience, SIPA student Isabela Cunha (MIA’15), a Human Rights concentrator, inquired about how weak government institutions can contribute to development, serving as a catalysts for durable development in order to foster long-lasting peace. One of the panelists, Professor Stephen Marks of Harvard, replied to Ms. Cunha that, “I spent 15 years teaching at SIPA and I’m very pleased to see you here. [The UN Development Programme] was an active member of the high level task force and we sought with the help of the UNDP’s participation to address the issue of the development process and how to make the right to development agenda to contribute to other efforts being made throughout the UN.”

SIPA students were enormously grateful for the upfront access at ECOSOC and ended the day with a call to action in favor of fair and accessible development beyond typical government agendas. Following an afternoon filled with relevant policy discussions with high-level actors, the group went back to SIPA to begin preparations for final exams.