THE LONG ANTICIPATED UN STUDIES SPECIALIZATION HAS ARRIVED AT SIPA

By Ryan Berger

The 2014–2015 academic year marks a new chapter in United Nations Studies (UNS) at SIPA. Due to the hard work of UNS Director, Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer, and the enthusiasm of committed students in the previous academic year, the SIPA administration, led by Dean Merit Janow, agreed to a more institutionalized structure for UNS. Now, for the first time in the history of SIPA, students are able to choose a specialization in UN Studies. Accordingly, the “co-curricular” status of the formerly known United Nations Studies Program was phased out, making way for the UNS specialization path of study, under the umbrella of the International Organizations (IO) specialization. Continued on Page 11

An “Off-The-Record” Conversation on Recent Events in the Middle East with UN Special Coordinator Robert Serry

Special Envoy Said Djinnit Discusses Great Lakes Region with UNS Students

See Page 5 for More on “Voices from the Field”

Robert Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, with UN Studies Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer.

Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region with UN Studies Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer.
UNS WORKING RETREAT FOCUSES ON UN 70TH ANNIVERSARY

By Chidimma Emelue

45 SIPA students had the unique opportunity to dialogue about current events and instruments of global governance during the 2014 United Nations Studies (UNS) Retreat. The working weekend, which was organized by UNS Specialization Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer and co-sponsored with the United Nations Studies Working Group, took place in the charming village of Chester, Connecticut on September 20 and 21. Entitled “70 Years Later: The United Nations at a Crossroad in a Changing World,” consisted of the retreat consisted of formally organized presentations, lectures, question-and-answer sessions, informal conversations, and networking sessions.

As the United Nations prepares to commemorate the 70th anniversary of its founding, the various components of the United Nations system and the rest of the international community have taken steps to critically reflect on the past seventy years, and to discover ways in which the United Nations can enhance effective practices or adapt based on new global challenges. From Security Council meetings on lessons learned in peacekeeping to special reports commissioned by the Secretary-General to the development agenda after the Millennium Development Goals expire, this is undoubtedly a season of introspection and change at the UN.

The retreat counted on the participation of high-level members of the UN community. Aside from Professor Lindenmayer, speakers included: Youssef Mahmoud, senior advisor at the International Peace Institute; Bruce Jenks, adjunct professor at SIPA and former Assistant Secretary-General of the UN Development Programme; Jack Christofides, director of the Africa II division at the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); and Jenna Slotin, deputy director of the Post-2015 Initiative at the UN Foundation. Keynote speakers during the Saturday evening session were Ambassador Paul Seger, permanent representative of Switzerland to the UN and Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, former permanent representative of India to the UN. As the 69th UN General Assembly began on the Monday after the retreat, the retreat organizers were so grateful to have such a distinguished group of UN professionals spend the weekend with UNS.

Shortly after arriving to the Guest House Retreat and Conference Center, on Saturday morning from New York City, students began session. Working groups reflected on key themes of security, development and human rights. Students analyzed the ways in which the United Nations has adapted to these challenges over time, taking into account contemporary developments and approaches such as new drivers of conflict, protection of civilians and intervention brigades, and the post-2015 development agenda on topics such as gender and climate change. Each working group presented its findings and recommendations to a distinguished panel that included many of the aforementioned speakers. Two winning groups, one in the “security” cluster and one in the “development and human rights” cluster, were awarded exclusive meetings with the head of DPKO, Under Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous, and a senior official in UN WOMEN.

Given current international headlines, in each working group the discussions focused on the new drivers of conflict like the rise extremist Islam and Ebola.

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UNS SPEAKS AT UNGA HIGH-LEVEL SIDE EVENT

By Lia Cairone and Monica Bernardo

Approximately 40 SIPA students braved the rain and heightened security on September 25 on the margins of the 69th UN General Assembly (UNGA) to attend the special session called "Moving Away from the Death Penalty." The United Nations Studies (UNS) Specialization Director, Elisabeth Lindenmayer, arranged SIPA’s participation in this special session. The high-level event, organized by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and which occurred in the ECOSOC Chamber, celebrated the release of a new book, Moving Away from the Death Penalty: Arguments, Trends and Perspectives, and preceded a vote in the Human Rights Council to abolish the death penalty globally. SIPA was the only school allowed to participate in the meeting. Cleo Zhang (MIA ’16) was selected to represent SIPA and ask an important question.

In his welcoming address, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson noted that today, more countries than ever support the abolition of the death penalty. He emphasized a theme of strong leadership and encouraged leaders to exercise their legal authority of commutation and pardon, and to install a death penalty moratorium in their respective states in order to protect this fundamental human right: the right to life.

The side event counted on speeches from the leaders of Benin, Italy, Mongolia, and Tunisia. In candid remarks, President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj of Mongolia highlighted the irreversibility of the death penalty, acknowledging the inevitability of human error, and asked how one can take a precious human life. President Elbegdorj stemmed the tide of public opinion to take steps toward abolishing the death penalty in Mongolia in 2012. Furthermore, President Mohamed Moncef Marzouki of Tunisia recounted his struggles against popular sentiment to secure a de jure prohibition of the death penalty in his country’s Constitution.

Prince Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein of Jordan, the UN Human Rights Commissioner, remarked that revenge is what primarily underlies the punitive consequence prized most by those who support the death penalty. He further reminded the plenary that deterrence is only a myth; justice “requires not only retribution, but genuine recognition of the wrongdoers” of the consequences of their actions.

During the brief period of follow-up interventions, former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, representing the International Commission against the Death Penalty, noted recent cases of “botched” executions in the United States. He raised the issue of social justice and reiterated that there is never certainty around guilt: “No state and no nation and no legal system can provide that certainty.”

Despite the broad support for abolition of the death penalty in the chamber, representatives from Saudi Arabia and Singapore shared the need for understanding “unique” situations in different countries. After highlighting the nature of organized criminal networks and the brutality of their crimes, Singapore’s representative asserted, “People know the story of Singapore. You can send your ten-year-old child on public transportation and not have to worry that your child will not return. This is not revenge, nor vengeance. This is deterrence.”

In closing the session, Chinese student Cleo Zhang, on behalf of SIPA, had the rare opportunity to share her personal experience with the death penalty: “There are many today in China, including friends and members of my own family, who see (the death penalty) as bringing justice. What kind of tools can the UN use to convince and assist countries that favor the death penalty to abolish it?” The ambassador from the United Kingdom, sitting just a few seats away from Ms. Zhang and Professor Lindenmayer, took a moment before delivering his prepared statement and replied directly to Ms. Zhang, “We sit down and continue the conversation. That is the most important way to move forward. That is the basis for this book that has been published, to serve as a basis for a dialogue for all that want to engage in this debate.”

A day after the high-level event, the Human Rights Council passed a resolution, urging states to abolish the death penalty. The resolution passed by a vote of 29 in favor, 10 against and 8 abstentions.

The struggle will continue as the world grapples with this critical issue. In the words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, “The death penalty has no place in the 21st century.”
HERVÉ LADSOUS, HEAD OF DPKO, DISCUSSES PEACEMAKING CHALLENGES WITH UNS AT THE UN

By Selim Sazak
On October 31, Under Secretary-General (USG) Hervé Ladsous, Head of the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), granted a private conversation to a select group of SIPA on the present and future of UN peacekeeping. UNS Director, Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer, offered this meeting as a prize for the best team during UNS’s annual retreat competition.

Participating students were enormously grateful for USG Ladsous’s time—one full hour—in light of numerous conflicts in Syria, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali, and elsewhere with which DPKO is actively engaged.

The meeting with USG Ladsous had come at a moment of transition and transformation in the UN’s peacemaking doctrines and his remarks followed these themes. Drawing attention to the fact that “[the UN] is increasingly facing non-state actors like Al-Qaeda, Daesh [ISIS], human and drug traffickers,” USG Ladsous remarked, “long gone are the times of relatively simple agreement enforcement.”

Citing recent developments in UN peacekeeping operations like the abduction of UNDOF peacekeepers in the Golan Heights or the “price being paid in Mali” with the loss 36 MINUSMA peacekeepers in the last six months, USG Ladsous emphasized that this changing landscape is compelling the UN to review and rethink its existing approaches, a task undertaken at many levels, including the Secretary-General’s Peacekeeping Review Panel.

In this context, USG Ladsous discussed many facets of peacekeeping operations, including: new practices in the use of force like force intervention brigades; the expanding use of technologies like unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and balloon-borne devices “working perfectly” in Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo; and the integration of intelligence capabilities like the All Source Intelligence Fusion Unit (ASIFU).

USG Ladsous emphasized the focus on expanding operational capabilities should not divert attention away from political, economic and social processes of peacebuilding: “At the end of the day, there has to be more reconciliation, a return to normalcy, to the rule of law and the reestablishment of the state because our core task is protecting civilians.”

USG Ladsous’s introductory remarks were followed by a lively and wide-ranging question-and-answer session. An important theme was the increasing involvement of European member-states in peacekeeping operations like the participation of Irish peacekeepers in UNDOF, Swedish and Dutch peacekeepers in MINUSMA, EFOR in Central African Republic, and Operation Artemis in Eastern DRC. USG Ladsous expressed that European involvement is bringing high-end capabilities but since 95% of peacekeepers are still provided by the Global South, fairer burden sharing is morally and politically necessary.

China’s increasing contributions to peacekeeping were also discussed as a welcome development. USG Ladsous pointed that regional organizations like ECOWAS and the AU have been key partners, providing knowledge, legitimacy and capacity to peacekeeping operations; he cited the example of CAR where an ECOWAS force preceded a joint EU–AU force that was later replaced by UN peacekeepers.

On overarching themes like the protection of civilians, gender mainstreaming, children in conflicts, and the role of extractive industries in fostering conflict, USG Ladsous gave a broad overview of the UN’s ongoing efforts like the training of 20,000 peacekeepers on child soldiers, the introduction of child protection officers and increasing capacity to bolster operational awareness to better provide for civilians. He stated that these issues will find new traction after the Review Panel concludes its work.

In sum, USG Ladsous emphasized the challenges facing peacekeeping in its near future. The rise of threats, he argued, requires from the UN new doctrines, capacities and approaches, particularly to intelligence gathering and regional cooperation. As threats evolve, clear exit strategies were necessary to mitigate the risk of mission creep. Finally, in this landscape, preserving peacekeeping’s core commitment to impartiality was stressed as a key objective. USG Ladsous concluded by saying, “Peacekeeping and the responsibility to protect cannot become alibis for regime change and allowing that to happen would be a great disservice.”
“VOICES FROM THE FIELD”

UNS Director, Elisabeth Lindenmayer, has began a new series bringing to the students a first-hand account of the realities on the ground from Secretary-General Special Envoys, Special Representatives and Coordinators.

SAID DJINNIT, SPECIAL ENVOY OF SECRETARY-GENERAL, DISCUSSES GREAT LAKES REGION

By Ryan Berger

On the evening of October 27, mere hours after briefing the UN Security Council that morning on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region, spoke with ICR and UNS students about the region. The conversation, which is part of UNS’s “Voices from the Field” series, was organized by Conflict Resolution Working Group, co-sponsored by UNS and moderated by UNS Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer.

The event in Columbia’s International Affairs Building saw strong attendance from SIPA students in spite of the short notice and was co-sponsored by the International Conflict Resolution Specialization. Special Envoy (SE) Djinnit, an Algerian diplomat, was previously the head of the UN Office in West Africa, the Special Representative for the Sahel Region and the High Level Representative of the Secretary-General to Nigeria and Boko Haram. Prior to his UN roles, SE Djinnit had served in various capacities with the Organization of African Unity and the African Union. He was appointed to his current envoy post in July 2014, replacing former President of Ireland Mary Robinson.

When asked about his knowledge of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, SE Djinnit said that the current conflict there has been the only war in Africa that has divided the continent into two camps: those who support the state and those who support the rebels. He views his role in the Great Lakes Region as more of a facilitator than a mediator; his team works hard to facilitate dialogue with ethnic groups, as well as intra-regional associations such as the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

SE Djinnit’s office is even involving the private sector given the resource wealth of the sub-region. He told the audience that he was scheduled to participate in a meeting in early November in Kinshasa with ministers of mining from around the region.

The special envoy said, “Corruption is the major threat to stability on our continent” and that it is created more by institutional factors than by poverty. Professor Lindenmayer added that the common thread is a crisis of governance and added that current global challenges such as the emergence of Ebola in West Africa and al-Qaeda splinter groups in Iraq and Syria are responses to their governments not giving those citizens enough resources or services.

In addition, when asked for his thoughts on the way forward in peacekeeping, SE Djinnit pointed to a comprehensive review underway inside the UN of peacekeeping operations and hoped that the UN will emerge as an “effective, stable organization” based on the recommendations, which should be issued in 2015. Professor Lindenmayer noted that the biggest issue in peacekeeping is financial; the UN’s budget depends on the contributions of member-states and thus it is limited in the scope of its expenditures.

Students were very grateful for the insights of Special Envoy Djinnit and that he made time in his busy New York trip to speak with the SIPA community. They were equally as appreciative for the inputs of Professor Lindenmayer, given her storied career in peacekeeping and expertise in African affairs.
SIPA STUDENTS ATTEND TALK BY KOFI ANNAN
“New World Disorder: Challenges for the UN in the 21st Century”

ANNOUNCING THE FIFTH EDITION OF
“A DAY AT THE UNITED NATIONS”

By Monica Bernardo
Forty SIPA students will get to call the United Nations their office for the day for the fifth edition of the United Nations Studies initiative: “A Day at the United Nations: A View from the Inside.” Over 112 students, a record turnout, vied for a spot in the selective program, which includes accompanying UN staffers during their typical day of meetings and briefings at headquarters and teleconferences with the field.

The goal of the initiative is to have SIPA students experience the culture of the UN and be exposed to the complexity and variety of functions its staff is called to perform. Above all, in the words of UN Studies Director, Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer, it gives students the opportunity “to meet the dedicated and passionate people working behind-the-scenes and help them to discover the human side of the organization.”

The application process included a personal statement explaining why students wanted to participate in the initiative and which agencies or departments they wished to observe. Desired placements included, inter alia, the Security Council, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA), the Department of Public Information (DPI), the Peacebuilding Commission Support Office (PBSO), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SR-CAAC), the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SR-SVC), and the Global Compact.

Each selected student will spend at least two days at his or her assigned UN office, fund or department. Last year, some students spent up to five days at the office they were placed. Historically, “A Day at the United Nations: A View from the Inside” has served as a launching point for mentorships, internships, and consultancies for SIPA students with the UN.

Please join our students and some of their UN hosts for their panel presentation scheduled for Wednesday, April 22, 2015 from 6-8 PM in room 1501 of the International Affairs Building.
By Ericka Dixon
“As we look around at a world in crisis, there is a sense that we are experiencing not simply an increase in violence and insecurity, but a shift in the nature of conflict itself.” These opening remarks, delivered by the Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, framed the UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security held on October 28. Around 30 SIPA students, led by UNS Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer, had the opportunity to observe the lively and passionate debate from the second-floor balcony in the brightly lit Security Council chamber. Sitting amongst policy makers and experts from a wide range of UN offices, SIPA students were fortunate for the opportunity to experience the intersection of issues ranging from human rights to terrorism at play on the international stage.

Over 70 representatives from 49 of the UN member-states highlighted the steps taken in their respective countries to promote the women, peace and security agenda. They also took the opportunity to call on other member-states to strengthen the implementation of Resolution 1325 ahead of the high-level review, taking place in 2015.

The meeting began with a statement from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s report on the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda set forth by Resolution 1325. In his report, the Secretary-General acknowledged the progress being made in the international community in moving “beyond viewing women as only victims of conflict to seeing them as agents of peace and progress” and called on States to strengthen their resolve in combatting Gender Based Violence.

Sobering statistics painted a grim picture of the issues affecting women in conflict. 2014 saw an unprecedented peak of internally displaced persons (IDPs) reaching 33.3 million, bringing the total number of IDPs worldwide to 51 million, half of whom are women. The kidnapping of girls by Boko Haram in Nigeria and the challenges of women escaping the conflicts raging in Syria and Iraq are a few examples cited as catalysts for international action. The time is now to provide meaningful implementation of the four pillars of Women, Peace and Security: protection, participation, conflict prevention and recovery.

The greatest takeaway was the reinforcement of this shift occurring - from women as victims to women as agents of change in development and security. Ms. Perceval of Argentina was eloquent and inspiring with her closing remarks: “It is time for women - because we are half the population of the world, because we are human, because we have the right to enjoy our rights, and because we have a voice, convictions and courage - we will head into 2015 staking our claims. We do not want to be either oppressors or oppressed. We want to be free and equal, so that we can be the authors of real peace.”
Jessica Faieta, SIPA alumna (MIA '93)
Photo courtesy of UNDP.

By Shravya Jain
Ms. Jessica Faieta, UN Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, was born and raised in Ecuador. She came to the United States in the 1980s for her undergraduate degree and after that applied to Columbia Business School (CBS). It was there that she discovered her passion for the developmental sector and decided to switch to the SIPA program with a focus on economic and political development. Ms. Faieta also briefly worked as a commercial officer in the Canadian Embassy in Ecuador. Prior to being appointed to her current position in March 2014, Ms. Faieta served as Deputy Director of her bureau, Senior Country Director at UNDP Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, and UNDP Resident Representative in El Salvador and Belize. She recently sat down with UNS Wire to discuss her distinguished career, her Columbia education and advice for women and young professionals.

Shravya Jain: What led you to join the United Nations?
Jessica Faieta: I always had the UN in my sights. I used to actually walk around here, look at these big buildings, see the people come out of there and I would wonder, “How does one get to work in this organization?” When I went back to Ecuador, I got to know the UN Volunteers program. I didn’t know exactly what it was and the kind of work I would do; I just knew it was part of the UN. I was a UN Volunteer for a year.

SJ: What are the skills that you have carried along from SIPA and CBS?
JF: From CBS, I remember the analytical vigor. Having the ability to do analysis and really understand how important issues of profitability are, whether you are profit-oriented or not. From SIPA, I remember the debates. It is very important to see the different angles around each issue. The world is a big place and is not only concentrated in the rich countries. I also remember the fantastic practical course offered by SIPA where we would actually function as a consulting group to solve development problems. I learned quite a bit about the UN from SIPA; I also had the opportunity to do an internship at the UNDP. I believe I am a product of those opportunities, of those internships, of those talks and those visitors.

SJ: Do you think the landscape at the UN has changed in the last 15 years for women?
JF: I belong to a generation where the UN started to place a lot of effort into recruiting women. After my internship, I applied to what was then the entry-level program of the UNDP. The recruitment was 50 percent men and 50 percent women. As we went along, we lost a lot of women. I do remember some bias at that time about whether women could handle going to Afghanistan or Liberia. There was another element: even though there was strong sensitivity that we needed to bring in more women, there was less sensitivity of what you need to do to retain them. But it has changed and I am result of that. It’s funny because now the UNDP Administrator, [the Associate Administrator], myself as director of bureau and my deputy are all women. I remember when we were very young there were very few women in top positions.

SJ: So are we ready for a female Secretary-General?
JF: (Laughs) We are hoping for a female Secretary-General! I think it’s high time for that. Certainly there are fantastic women leaders that can aspire to that position. You have great leaders of UN agencies including our own Administrator. We work to promote and expand women in the political space. So if we help countries increase the proportion of women, we should do it in our own house as well.

SJ: Let’s talk about your experience in Haiti. Were you prepared for the loss that you saw?
JF: When I accepted the job to go to Haiti, even though I had been warned about all the difficulties, I just could not imagine the magnitude of the destruction and the suffering of the Haitian people. The entire city was completely flat and millions of people were living in tents everywhere. We were still struggling with our own losses but we had to push through. We didn’t know where to start.

SJ: What is your coping mechanism?
JF: I am, for better or for worse, very shy there were very few women in top positions. Certainly there are fantastic women leaders that can aspire to that position. You have great leaders of UN agencies including our own Administrator. We work to promote and expand women in the political space. So if we help countries increase the proportion of women, we should do it in our own house as well.

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UNS ATTENDS SC OPEN MEETING ON CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

By Kelly Joseph

When the UN Security Council (UNSC) convened the second meeting of the year on children in armed conflict on September 8, over 20 SIPA students had a front-row seat. Led by UNS Director Elisabeth Lindenmayer, the SIPA delegation observed testimonies on the promotion and protection of the rights of children, specifically on the sobering topic of children in armed conflict as raised by the Secretary-General in the S/2014/339 briefing.

The meeting opened on a grim note: war and brutality are on the rise, placing a heavy toll on children, said Leila Zerrougui, UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Special Representative Zerrougui elaborated on current crises and expressed particular concern for how children have been impacted by extremist activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Boko Haram and how conflicts like the recent war in Gaza have led to high youth death tolls.

Special Representative Zerrougui brought to the audience’s attention the six grave violations against children during armed conflict as outlined in S/2014/339. These violations include recruitment, killing and maiming, sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abductions and denial of access to humanitarian assistance.

The special representative then introduced the ‘Children, Not Soldiers’ campaign, launched in March 2014 in conjunction with UNICEF. The initiative aims to end the recruitment and use of children in government forces in conflict by 2016. Out of eight countries with children in their armed forces, Sudan and Syria are the only two that have yet to sign an action plan to abolish the practice. The other six countries Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen have all made firm commitments to remove all child soldiers from their forces within the structured timeline.

While this campaign does not take into account non-state actors, it is a laudable step toward giving children back their childhoods.

Special Representative Zerrougui then turned to Forest Whitaker, the Academy Award-winning actor, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Reconciliation and founder of the Peace and Development Initiative. Having just returned from South Sudan he was able to shed light on the situation by sharing, “The situation on the ground remains dire and I fear there is no end in sight to the violence.” He cited that villages were destroyed, hospitals were closed, schools were being used as military posts and child soldiers were everywhere. Whitaker lamented, “These acts rob a human being of a time in their life that every child deserves.”

Following Whitaker’s heartfelt remarks, the UNSC was able to hear from someone who has been directly affected by armed conflict. Sandra Uwiringiyimana, a survivor of the 2004 Gatumba massacre at a refugee camp in Burundi. With an unwavering commitment to share her story of violence in hopes of saving others from the same fate, Ms. Uwiringiyimana told a chilling account of a night ten years ago when her little sister and many other family members were violently murdered and she narrowly escaped certain death.

Recounting her childhood, she pleaded with the Council to end the violence and bring the perpetrators to justice: “Healing and peace will not come until there is justice, until there is justice the nightmares will never end.”

At the open meeting, despite hearing harrowing challenges in regards to children and armed conflict, SIPA students also learned of are small, notable victories. Chad was recently removed from the list of violators and progress has been made in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo within their respective action plans.
In memoriam, honoring a SIPA alumna for her long career and commitment to peace. UN Studies interviewed Margaret Vogt just before she had been appointed as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office for the Central African Republic (CAR) in May 2011. She passed away shortly after coming back from a two-year assignment. Her generous support to the UN Studies specialization at SIPA will be unquestionably missed. Here is what she shared with students about her life when she was interviewed.

By Marie O’Reilly

There were few women, and even fewer African women, at Columbia University’s SIPA in 1977. Margaret Vogt was one of them. Today, she is the Deputy-Director of Africa Division 1 at the United Nation’s Department of Political Affairs. Originally from Nigeria, Vogt has had a prodigious career since she graduated (MIA ’77). From the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs in Lagos to the International Peace Academy in New York and from the African Union to the United Nations, Vogt has addressed military strategy, conflict prevention and conflict resolution from every possible angle.

Her research has informed Nigerian defence policy and shaped regional approaches to conflict management in Africa. She has participated in UN field missions, in Somalia in 1994 and 1995 and Liberia in 1997. In 2008, she served as a senior political adviser to the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation process.

“Initially I didn’t even think of the SIA,” says Vogt, referring to SIPA as it was known when she was an undergraduate at Barnard. But when she discovered the package of international affairs and international law classes it offered, she knew it was for her. “I really enjoyed it, and I think I did well,” Vogt recalls fondly, as she talks about classes she took in comparative politics, military strategy, and political strategy. “I will forever remain grateful because the SIA provided me with the opportunity to make a career in this area.”

Today, Vogt says the most satisfying part of her job at the UN is the multilateralism. “It’s both difficult and rewarding,” she explains. “You have to balance so many different interests and parties. The challenge for you as a UN official is to remember to look at issues purely from the perspective of their value for peace and security.” At times, it can be difficult to prevent countervailing forces from getting in the way. In such a large organization, the personality of the people you work with also matters a lot, according to Vogt. “The Director and I see each other as real partners,” she says of her colleague João Honwana in Africa Division 1, “As he says, we clone each other!”

Policy papers, task forces and talking points—these make up some of the daily grind in the Department of Political Affairs. “There are all sorts of quality control points before a document gets to the Secretary General,” says Vogt. “We produce an inordinate amount of talking points. Sometimes it drives me crazy.” But the talking points are necessary, Vogt continues, and besides, “Through your work with talking points, you can put your words into his mouth.” Her knowing smile breaks into a grin.

With six children and a husband, Vogt says she didn’t have to choose between marriage and a career. “The key is to have a supportive husband,” she says. “But it doesn’t just happen like that;” she adds, clicking her fingers, “you grow into it as a couple.” Reflecting on the many stages of her career, Vogt describes her life in chapters. Recently appointed Special Representative of the Secretary General for the Central African Republic, she is about to turn another page. But first, thinking about her diverse experiences, Vogt offers some insights for SIPA students today. “Life is all about choices,” she says. She repeats the sentence more slowly. “Have I always made the right choice? Perhaps not! But you continue to invest.”

By Marie O’Reilly

Furthermore, the intricate connections between security, development and human rights depict the ways in which the world has become more complex since the establishment of the UN Charter in 1945. Professor Lindenmayer noted that health and disease as drivers of conflict, for instance, demonstrate the ways in which the international community has re-imagined conflict, and suggests that UN must strive to incorporate these new conceptualizations, following the example of the Secretary-General’s multidimensional initiative for combating Ebola.

With the new United Nations Studies Specialization this academic year and first-year SIPA students excited about pursuing graduate studies a few short miles from the UN Secretariat, an increasing number of SIPA students undoubtedly have strong interests in the United Nations system. Their desire to spend one of the first weekends of the semester examining forward-thinking concepts concerning the UN further illustrates this desire and just how much they took away from the engaging weekend retreat.
UNS ATTENDS SC DEBATE ON WORKING METHODS

By Gustavo Macedo and Julie Anderson

“Knowing that it is as inevitable as water being wet, we also know that the working methods can also be and must be improved,” stated Ambassador Maria Cristina Perceval, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the UN and President of the UN Security Council (SC) in October 2014. On October 23, Ambassador Perceval chaired the fifth open debate on the working methods of the SC and 30 SIPA students led by UNS Director, Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer, had ringside seats to witness thoughts from SC member-states relating to these important internal justice issues and the process by which the SC improves its working methods. The debate centered on the testimony of Kimberly Prost, Ombudsperson for the SC’s Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, and Fatou Bensouda, Prosecutor for the International Criminal Court (ICC).

In her remarks to the SC, Ms. Prost spoke about the revision of the Ombudsperson mandate. She supported the mandate’s extension to other sanction regimes, arguing that it would provide a broader independent review mechanism for the decision-making process on potential sanctions targets. She also stressed that the Security Council should take into account the situation of individuals of other sanctions regimes, who do not have access to the same mechanisms to request the revision of their situation. This has been particularly troubling because overlapping processes and the ensuing lack of transparency creates confusion.

Following Ms. Prost’s remarks, Ms. Bensouda began to address the Council. In her testimony, she urged the SC to review its language regarding current crises in order to convey a more transparent and focused message to the international community “similar to the language used in past Council resolutions requiring cooperation from all States with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.” Ms. Bensouda added, “The language of the

“The early finalization of a code of conduct that contains a commitment to refraining from the use of the veto in situations of mass atrocities.”

Bensouda added, “The language of the

NEW UN STUDIES SPECIALIZATION

Continued from Page 1

The new two-track option will see IO and UNS specializers taking the same “International Organizations” core course and choosing two courses among a menu of electives for either track, depending on the type and scope of international organizations that students wish to study.

After UNS welcomed new students to SIPA in late August through a presentation session at the International Affairs Building and social outing at a nearby café during the orientation week, 25 students elected to register for the inaugural UNS specialization class. A few weeks later, on September 17, the specialists gathered with Professor Lindenmayer for an orientation luncheon and then again on November 18 for a midterm luncheon.

Students that have selected to be UNS specializers come from diverse concentrations at SIPA, including EPD, ISP, HRHP, USP, and IFEP. This is reflective of the UN as the biggest global institution encompassing so many facets such as health, development, finance, human rights, communications, and the environment.

The breakdown of UNS specializers’ nationalities could be considered a miniature United Nations in its own right, with students from Bangladesh, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Pakistan, Peru, the United Kingdom, the United States, and more.

When students were asked why they chose to specialize in UNS, answers ranged from wanting to learn how countries negotiate on resolutions to learning about global economic governance to discovering useful skills that can be successful in the UN. Recommendations for future activities include a potential short course on writing techniques for UN drafts and resolutions as well as a debate society to conduct mock UN simulations.

These myriad perspectives are sure to benefit the new UNS specialization and all involved look forward to a productive year ahead.
SIPA ALUMNUS DISCUSSES
GAZA WAR EXPERIENCE WITH UNS

By Charlotta Segerström

On October 29, Pushkar Sharma (MPA ’13) was the featured guest in a roundtable discussion organized by the United Nations Studies Specialization and the International Conflict Resolution Specialization. Sharma specifically spoke about his on-the-ground experience during the 50-day war in Gaza as a member of the UN Coordination Team in Gaza.

His work as Access and Liaison Officer entailed negotiating humanitarian access at checkpoints with both Hamas and the Israeli Defense Force, organizing evacuations and maintaining channels of communications.

Pushkar and Professor Lindenmayer, who moderated the event, compared experiences relating to how to personally deal with conflict. Both of them agreed that it sometimes took quite some time to process what you had seen and been through. Professor Lindemayer told students about how she had been personally impacted by travels to Somalia, as well as to Haiti with a group of students during the earthquake. When there is a job at hand, and other people depend on you, it is easy to put off your own emotions for some time, both of them reasoned.

Sharma candidly shared his impressions of this challenging work in the middle of a conflict zone, a situation that he described as surreal. The discussion also touched on recent developments in the Israeli-Arab conflict, and laid the foundation for possible future scenarios. In addition, Sharma offered professional advice to current SIPA students, describing the way in which he secured his current position as well as the SIPA skills he uses most on the job.

SIPA ALUMNUS DISCUSSES
GAZA WAR EXPERIENCE WITH UNS

UPCOMING EVENTS
UN Studies will organize a series of events to reflect on the 70th anniversary of the UN, beginning with the following:

January 27 (6-8pm) Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations “The UN at 70: Past Experiences and Future Opportunities”
February 10th Anniversary of the Peacebuilding Commission March 11 Celebrating International Women’s Day April 22 (6-8pm) Panel on “Day at the UN”

UNS will also continue its series of working lunches with Ambassadors.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS
The UN Studies specialization continues to develop, build and strengthen the synergy between Morningside Heights and Turtle Bay. As a case in point OCHA has requested for an ongoing partnership with SIPA. In early 2015, a brainstorming meeting will be convened with SIPA students and faculty. Potential OCHA-SIPA partnerships have the multiple objectives of getting more young talent into OCHA, sharing knowledge about humanitarianism and having students take part in research or internships opportunities.