Annan Is the Guest of SIPA’s UN Studies

Optimism in a New World Order

By Sophia Barney-Farrar, MIA 2016

On the night of Wednesday, November 4th over five hundred students from Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs lined up outside Pulitzer Hall to welcome and hear the wise words of Kofi Annan, Former Secretary-General of the United Nations. As was highlighted in opening remarks by Dean Merit Janow as well as Annan himself, the UN’s celebration of its 70th anniversary the month prior gave pause for reflection. All the while, SIPA anticipates its own 70th anniversary in January 2016. In this sense, SIPA and the UN are “almost twin sisters,” Annan remarked, noting the ways in which the two institutions have been linked over the past seven decades, including through the recent addition of SIPA’s UN Studies Specialization, which cultivates emerging leaders who resolve to solve world problems after graduation.

Approximately 250 attendees were lucky enough to be admitted into the intimate setting to hear Annan’s current assessment of world affairs. In his opening remarks, he spoke of the influence of the UN in today’s world, noting that it has never been so impactful to be a facilitator of resolution to central issues such as: climate change, migration, and the breakdown of the Middle East, among others.

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By M. Affan Javed, MPA 2016

The United Nations Studies Program held its Annual Retreat on “The New Peace and Security Architecture” on September 19-20, 2015 at the Wisdom Retreat and Conference Centre in Litchfield, Connecticut. The retreat was attended by more than thirty SIPA students with diverse backgrounds and a common passion for learning about United Nations Peacekeeping. High-level peacekeeping and peacebuilding experts and practitioners from the United Nations participated, enabling students to immerse themselves in conflicts in Mali, Libya, The Central African Republic and South Sudan.

Professor Lindenmayer opened the retreat by sharing her vision for the United Nations Specialization which aims at exposing students to the complexities of a multilateral organization and making the UN and its staff more accessible to them. Youssef Mahmoud who served as a member of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) provided an account of the main findings and recommendations of the report of the panel entitled “Uniting our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People. He outlined some of the major shifts, which would be needed and in particular, the primacy of politics, stronger partnerships and people-centered operations. Mr. Mahmoud also highlighted the importance of looking at peace building and peacekeeping in a holistic way as part and parcel of the same peace operations. A new peace architecture was needed to provide a clear division of labor between the various actors, based on their comparative advantage. Finally, it was important that the issue of accountability be at the center of the work of those working on the maintenance of international peace and security.

The day continued with a panel discussion conducted by Professor Lindenmayer and including a number of UN experts with field experience: Stephen Jackson, Head of the Secretariat to the Advisory Group on the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture; Arthur Boutellis, Director of the Center for Peace Operations at The Center for Peace Operations and SIPA students.

Students presented their work to the UN panel and received feedback.
The beginning of Columbia University’s Fall 2015 semester and the second year of the UN Studies Specialization at SIPA took place as a luncheon in concert with the United Nations General Assembly adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the UN, 193 member states came together to make history; simultaneously close to 50 students anticipated bearing witness to history. Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer welcomed students by encouraging them - as future leaders - to place humanity first; to keep the people of the world at the forefront of their studies; and to prioritize the sustaining of hope for humanity. She shared how the Secretary-General, also known as the secular pope, described the adoption of the SDGs as a grand achievement - a momentous victory of multilateralism, including the universal agreement on the upcoming Climate Change Summit in Paris.

Additionally, students were informed of what it means for 193 member states to reach consensus on a particular issue. It was made very clear that the UN represents the pulse of the world. The importance for global and regional powers to work through the UN and the rule-based system it provides was highlighted. The UN continues to make an important contribution in the creation of international norms which provides a common framework in which the world should operate.

Eager students learned of the many events and opportunities to be offered by the specialization including: attendance to UN Security Council meetings, the popular Day at the UN initiative, the competitive UN University (UNU)/UNS Junior Fellowship, Working Lunches with Ambassadors, courses on the United Nations, research projects and more. Professor Lindenmayer also teased out information on upcoming events in the 2015-2016 academic year including: the selection of a new UNU fellowship recipient, a UN Security Council visit regarding progress on SCR 1325 15 years later, and upcoming research projects on peacekeeping operations.

At the start of its second year, the UNS Specialization consisted of over 50 students, many of whom were present at the lunch to share their common vision for the specialization. Students spoke of their expectations and made a number of suggestions for future panels. In particular they made a strong call for the inclusion of civil society, NGOs and grassroots organizations representing the interests of marginalized groups to be included in events facilitated by UNS. Other students asked for a focus on practical research skills.

The UNS Specializers started the year eager to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges the UN faces 70 years after its creation, and prepared to become the future policy leaders of the world.
By Priyanka Chadha, MIA 2016

On the 17th of November, Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer provided a unique opportunity to SIPA students – an intimate discussion with Hervé Ladsous the Under-Secretary-General (USG) for the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The event took place at the United Nations Secretariat and was attended by students from Professor Lindenmayer’s course on the UN Security Council and Peacekeeping Operations in Africa as well as United Nations Studies (UNS) Specializers who had won a competition at the UNS retreat earlier in the semester.

The USG began by providing a review of the current year in Peacekeeping which he called “a momentous year.” He first highlighted the overarching themes and major recommendations of the recent report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (the HIPPO report) – reflecting on peace operations today and the emerging challenges of the 21st Century. He reminded students that Peacekeeping is primarily, “a tool of the Security Council to achieve a political goal.” It is important to remember that “we are not a military operation, we are at the service of a political process and that should never be forgotten.” However, more often than not, peacekeeping operations (PKOs) are authorized in countries where, “the peace process is more a virtual reality than an actual fact.” The HIPPO report therefore re-dedicates itself to the primacy of politics. Lasting peace can only be achieved through political solutions which must be the guiding principle of all UN peace operations.

The second major shift in the HIPPO report is that peacekeeping operations should be more people-centered. The protection of civilians over the past 10 years has become the core mission mandate focus, to relieve the suffering of those affected by conflict and crisis. UN personnel must renew their resolve to serve and protect people. The third emphasis in the HIPPO report is the need for partnerships. Ladsous explained that even though DPKO has reached unprecedented levels in terms of both staffing and budget, peace operations should not be mandated to deploy in contexts where there is not even a semblance of peace on the ground. Peace enforcement in Somalia is a good example of what UN Peacekeeping cannot and should not take on and hence the need for a partnership with the African Union. In other places like Syria, Yemen and Iraq – the situation is compounded by the fact that there are also many spoilers and non-state actors on the ground. Peacekeeping cannot be used as a tool to fight terrorism, and in places like Mali, the French are handling the fight on terrorism and the Peacekeeping mission is handling all the other tasks mandated by the Security Council. These partnerships are vital to mission success.

Ladsous further explained that the success of peacekeeping operations, also depends on the quality of its personnel. For many years, the UN did not have jurisdiction over peacekeeping personnel. Peacekeepers were often poorly trained and badly equipped, which negatively impacted the mission outcomes. However improvements have been made in this area and the use of the ‘Standby System’ has significantly improved the readiness for more speedy deployment.

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The question of Syria has proved vexing for the world, and particularly the UN Security Council, which has been at odds in coming to agreement through the passing of a resolution. On November 11, 2015, SIPA students in Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer’s class, ‘The Security Council and Peacekeeping Operations in Africa’ participated in a simulation that debated the use of chemical weapons by the Government of Syria against its people, and how the Security Council should respond.

In anticipation of the simulation, students were asked to prepare a number of background papers, including an analysis of the root causes of the crisis, the human rights and humanitarian situation and the economic implications of the civil war on a post-conflict Syria.

Students were also invited to attend a fascinating briefing at the United Nations organized for them by Rami Shehadeh, Head of the Syrian Team in the Department of Political Affairs (DPA).

Professor Lindenmayer invited several distinguished guests from the United Nations to serve as resource persons during the simulation, including Ingrid Laslett, Political Affairs officer in the Syrian team, Quentin Cooleen, a lawyer with previous experience in Security Council Affairs, and Philippe Shell, a Political Officer in the Sanctions Branch of DPA.

The chairperson of the UN’s Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) first presented its report stating with the “highest degree of certainty” that chemical weapons were used by the Syrian government against its people. The US tabled a draft resolution recommending a number of Chapter VII measures including ICC referral.

Opening statements rang with conviction as students representing various members of the Security Council called for justice directed at the perpetrators of chemical warfare against the Syrian people, namely by the Syrian Arab Republic.

However the strong showing of sentiment in favor of justice and accountability at the start of the simulation was short-lived in comparison to the resolution that would ultimately be passed a full seven hours later. Both Russia and China strongly argued against any accountability measures under Chapter VII on the grounds that they may negatively impact the peace process underway. A number of member states expressed the same concern. Moreover Russia firmly argued that the findings of the JIM were premature and inconclusive. Following intense consultations and a threat of veto, the US tabled a second draft resolution leading to further compromise. By the end of the evening, the content of the resolution had changed considerably along with many of the alliances in the Council, and had been diluted to the point of what many argued was not justice at all.

During this simulation, the students got to see firsthand the insipid process of diplomacy and the underlying power struggle between sovereign state’s national interests and the collective effort of the Security Council to

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Interview With Winner of Fall 2015 United Nations University/UN Studies Junior Fellowship

By Christy Grace Provines, MPA
Fall 2016

Andrés Ochoa Toasa, a first year MIA student from Ecuador, was the lucky winner of the competitive United Nations University (UNU) Junior Fellowship during his first semester at SIPA. The Fellowship opportunity is a “one year new” partnership between SIPA’s UN Studies Specialization and the UN University, which allows students access to senior policymakers as well as firsthand research experience on relevant UN issues.

Ochoa had the opportunity to learn from and work with senior Fellow, Dr. James Cockayne, Head of UNU Office at the UN and to be part of the research team finalizing a number of reports on one of the most important current human rights issues, ‘Modern Slavery.’ The report entitled, Unshackling Development: Why we need a global Partnership to End Modern Slavery was immediately followed by a companion report, Fighting Modern Slavery: What role for International Criminal Justice? Both reports were presented to member states by Dr. Cockayne in early December.

One of the key recommendations was the addition of an envoy to further research the topic of slavery, consolidate existing policies and put forward more comprehensive strategies to combat the issue. The report received overwhelmingly supportive feedback, and Ochoa said that one UN member state found the research so compelling that they volunteered to create a task force that they would then manage.

Ochoa described the work and the experience as gratifying – “The Fellowship provided an important learning experience that is unique from both a field work and academic perspective,” he said. When asked what the most interesting part of his time as a Junior Fellow was, he replied, “It was interesting to see how a topic starts as an idea. The path that the report will ultimately take is determined by the research; furthermore, getting to witness the response of the member states is what was the most gratifying. It’s not about the policy alone but also about the politics.”

Ochoa has aspirations of working in policy at the UN when he graduates from SIPA in May 2017, and this experience has only heightened his resolve that bridging the gap between those working in the field and those shaping and developing policies in NYC is an integral component in the development of effective international policy and an important function at the UN.

Ochoa holds undergraduate degrees in International Relations and Law and has five years of field experience as the Country Director at NGO, TECHO in Ecuador. His areas of academic concentration at SIPA includes Human Rights and Economic and Political Development. He credits the sole reason that he chose SIPA over other schools to the UN Studies Specialization, directed by Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer. The intimate access that students have with officials at the UN is unprecedented and unmatched by other schools. Ochoa was emphatic when he said, “The program has lived up to its reputation in every way!”

Please feel free to contact Andrés about his experience with UNU and/or read both reports at - http://unu.edu/events/archive/book-launch/unu-report-launch-modern-slavery.html#overview
By Fabio Krishna Periera, MPA
2017

In a packed room with the George Washington Bridge gleaming in the fading twilight, the United Nations Studies Specialization (UNS) at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs hosted a book launch for *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century*. The book offers a series of essays edited by Under-Secretary-General and Rector of the United Nations University David M. Malone, United Nations University Director for Policy Research Sebastian von Einsiedel and Executive Director of the Security Council Report Bruno Stagno Ugarte (the latter could not attend). It presents a follow up to a previously published volume on the UNSC through the year 2000 and focuses on the increased activity of the Council on a wider variety of issues. Moderated by Professor Elisa-beth Lindenmayer, the event was also attended by the head of the United Nations University Office at the UN, James Cockayne, the current recipient of the UNU-SIPA Junior Research Fellowship, Andrés Ochoa as well as past winners Franziska Seethaler and Juliette Faure.

Alternating between discussions on the structure of the book and its content, the launch provided students a forum to ask tough questions on the nature of the UNSC itself, proposed reforms to the Council, and the role of the UN in a number of relevant policy areas. HIV/AIDS, gender, peacekeeping, and the Iran Deal were all subjects for discussion during the two hours which the authors spent discussing their work and conducting analysis on the Security Council with SIPA students.

Interspersed with reflections from Professor Lindenmayer’s experience, the bulk of the evening was spent discussing the number of challenges the UNSC is currently facing. Special attention was paid to the unfolding developments in Mali and the failure of the UN to live up to some of the Charter’s stated goals. Considering the events unfolding in the Central African Republic (CAR), Under-Secretary-General Malone remarked on the collective disappointment of many UN leaders that the UN peacekeeping force never developed to its intended strength. Director von Einsiedel remarked the inability of peacekeepers to maintain order in a country like the CAR, which is several times larger than France in terms of geography.

While some attention was paid to unfounded Western fears of calcifying alliances amongst the permanent members of the Security Council, the successes also discussed, especially in the flurry of activity since the end of the Cold War, weighed heavily on the minds of the visiting UN scholars. Amongst those at the top of the list were the successful creation of the International Criminal Court and the fact that the Council, despite any recent skirmishes between the great powers on the Council, had still managed to pass resolutions by consensus over 60% of the time since 2000 on Chapter VII matters and over 90% of the time in general.

The distinguished guests continued on the difficulty of naming a book on such a weighty subject as the Security Council. Von Einsiedel let the audience in on the creative process demanded of Lynne Rienner Publishers in coming up with a "sexy title". Amongst those proposed were, “Securitize This, for a Robert De Niro Hollywood feel; Snow White and the Fourteen Dwarves, for fans of US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power; and Frozen II,” von Einsiedel joked. “All of these were rejected, and so we had to go with The UN Security Council in the 21st Century.”

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The Women, Peace and Security Agenda

By Julien Delemontex, MPA 2017 & Ashleigh Montgomery, MIA 2017

The Security Council is viewed by many SIPA students as a hallowed place that they had heard of, but few had seen it prior to attending this Open Meeting on Women, Peace, and Security. At the beginning of the Fall 2015 semester a couple dozen students from Professor Lindenmayr-er’s UN Studies Specialization as well as students from her course on the Security Council and Peacekeeping in Africa were privileged to be in attendance on this warm October day. Students waited with anticipation to be rushed into the highly ordered Chamber, moments before the meeting’s start. The symbolic mural gracing the wall behind the Council, which had witnessed some of the world’s most important security decisions, was striking in contrast to the comforting blue and gold tapestries. For SIPA students, the opportunity to witness this important debate was a milestone academic moment enabling them to gain a deeper understanding of the agenda, working methods and decision-making process of the Security Council.

The Secretary-General opened the meeting by outlining the meaning of SC Resolution 1325, expressing that the international legal framework addresses not only the disproportionate impact of war on women, but also stresses the pivotal role women should and do play in conflict management, conflict resolution and the building of sustainable peace. He underscored the implementation of the resolution as a key contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and a major challenge in the context of contemporary threats, “at a time when armed extremist groups place subordination of women at the top of their agenda, we must place women’s leadership and the protection of women’s rights at the top of ours.” Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, highlighted findings from a global study that women’s leadership and participation improve humanitarian assistance, strengthen peacekeepers’ efforts, foster peace talks and help counter violent extremism. According to the study, significant progress has been achieved with many peace agreements addressing the role of women, which has doubled in comparison to previous decades, notably from 1990 to 2010. In addition there is an increasing number of female professional staff at the UN, including among the Secretary-General’s appointed Special Representatives.

Deficiencies in progress were also outlined, including insufficient political will, lack of experts on gender issues, limited budgets dedicated to women’s empowerment and the persistence of sexual exploitation and abuse, including on several occasions by UN peacekeepers. The Director of the Congolese Women’s Fund gave a heart-wrenching account of the sexual violence and rape that women in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continue to face, “seven years ago I came to talk to you about rape and murder in my country and the work of Resolution 1325. Seven years later, I’m back. I really thought about if I wanted to come back. I wondered if there was any point - nothing has changed.”

Many others echoed her sentiments of disappointment on the lack of progress, including the NGO representatives of the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security who shared that, “ten years ago Iraqi women spoke to the Security Council. What would Iraq look like now if you had listened to the call for inclusion of women? Women’s rights were hijacked by the promises of Resolution 1325. I urge the UN Security Council and the entire international community: we cannot wait another 15 years for Resolution 1325 to be implemented.”

"In conflict it is often more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier.”
today more than ever.

On September 2015, when the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly convened in New York, Gettu had his plate full as the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management. Gettu managed the team that oversaw the organization of meetings, research work, interpretation of documents and verbatim recording of sessions besides graphic design and printing.

“We organized 1,631 meetings within 10 days,” Gettu said, “and delivered interpretations of 27,000 documents in all six official UN languages.” Those languages include: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. “It’s a huge operation, and timely delivery is paramount to the smooth running of deliberations aimed at solving key issues facing the world.”

The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), includes 1,200 staff at the UN headquarters in New York, and 2,200 others around the world, and is considered the largest body in the UN Secretariat. Gettu credits his education at SIPA as being “the best preparation for the job.” As a student, he added, he was adamant about contributing to peace and development, and to help tackle problems of poverty and lack of proper governance facing many nations of the world. While studying at SIPA, Gettu was able to make the connections that would help propel him into a consultancy at the UN first, and then a full time job working in the field in various places on the African continent.

Since finishing his PhD in Political Economy (1986) at Columbia, Gettu’s career both in and out of the UN has soared. He has taught at the University of Rochester, Hunter College and Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia. He also worked as Chief of Staff at the UNDP Executive Office in New York. Before his appointment to his current position at the Conference Management department in the New York office in 2013, Gettu served as the Assistant Secretary-General and Regional Bureau Director for UNDP in Africa. His career has spanned work across fields from development projects related to poverty alleviation, governance, education, to peace and security, capacity building in regards to sustainable development and environmental protection.

The challenge he says is “that one has to be a little patient... to be hard-working, and you have to be resilient to quickly grasp some of the key internal UN procedures, rules and regulations.” The UN’s diverse programming for children, women, refugees, peacekeeping, education and human rights allows for many soon to be professionals the opportunity to work in areas that they are passionate about.

A day after we sat down for the interview, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed Gettu to a new position: the Under-Secretary-General and Associate Administrator of UNDP. In his position, he will be working with UNDP offices in 166 countries to promote and implement the post-2015 Development Agenda. “It’s a new task that I am ready to take on,” he said. “Let’s move forward.”

Launching Security Council Publication
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Levity aside, students did not miss the opportunity by asking the presenting authors serious, pointed questions about controversial issues facing the Security Council. A significant amount of time was spent dealing with the first question of the evening, regarding Security Council reform, an issue, which framed the rest of the discussion as a rare glimpse into the actual working relationships between the Permanent Five members of the Security Council. The unsparring thorough answers provided by the panelists on topics ranging from the degradation of international law binding the actions between Russia and the United States to the challenges of addressing ongoing peacekeeping operations helped students consider global policy issues as virtual Security Council members. As the buzz of the evening’s high level discussion on the UNSC’s central role in global diplomacy gave way to applause and camera flashes, discussions of the issues raised at the event continued to light up the faces of SIPA students as they made their way into the warm embrace of a perfect autumn evening.
United Nations Studies Program Retreat

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from the experts. Both the teams from South Sudan and Libya won the first prize, an exclusive discussion with Hervé Ladsous, Head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to take place during the Fall semester.

Dinner followed with a guest speaker session featuring the Permanent Representative of Brazil, Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, former chair of the Peace Building Commission (PBC) at the UN. Ambassador Patriota shared his experience and highlighted the potential value of the PBC and its persistent underutilization by the Security Council. The PBC has the ability to talk to stakeholders who are otherwise difficult to engage with, and therefore is in a unique position to influence and support the peace building process. However, the decision to use that advice rests with the Security Council itself. Ambassador Patriota also talked about the challenge of ‘inclusion’ in peace building and mentioned that true leadership is the ‘capacity to identify and unleash the potential of people bottom-up,’ a condition for sustainable peace. Later that evening, students had an opportunity to mingle with Ambassador Patriota, Mr. Mahmoud and Professor Lindenmayer who continued to mentor and inspire students.

The next day started with an ice-breaker session where students were given an opportunity to get to know each other better and discover mutual interests and goals. The best part of the day was when Professor Lindenmayer shared her personal experience at the UN, her passion for its Charter, and the many assignments she had during her career. Students were told about the opportunities available to them at SIPA, including the many initiatives organized by the United Nations Studies Specialization such as the Day at the UN, Working Lunches, panels, and discussions with Ambassadors and professionals, in addition to Fellowship opportunities and a strong curriculum of courses on the United Nations. A presentation from the very active United Nations Studies Working Group followed.

The retreat concluded in the gardens of the Wisdom House, where everyone enjoyed the beautiful sunlight, delightful conversations and insightful reflections, before their journey back to SIPA.

United Nations Studies Program Retreat

The Future of Peacekeeping

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In addition to personnel, Ladsous spoke of the importance of new technology in providing on-the-ground intelligence and information on would-be spoilers and terrorists. He noted that over the previous two years, technology had become increasingly integrated into peacekeeping operations, which enhanced the security of the missions. He was grateful that, despite initial hesitation among the member states, many of them had begun to see value in enhanced surveillance tools.

Following Ladsous’ remarks, students were afforded the opportunity to ask some of the many questions they had prepared regarding the tool of peacekeeping and the operational challenges it faces on the ground. Questions ranged from the role of women in peace and security, terrorism as a new context for peacekeeping, the integration of technology in the delivery of mandates and accountability mechanisms for peacekeeping missions. Students all agreed after the meeting that the two hours went too fast and that Ladsous’ candid responses to their questions raised dozens more that could easily have filled the rest of the afternoon. They left inspired by Ladsous’ compelling and candid testimony of the many challenges he faces on an every day basis as the Head of a Department backstopping 16 peacekeeping missions around the world.

Students joining hands around the labyrinth and enjoying the grounds while at the UN Studies Retreat.
Optimism in A New World Order

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Annan prophetically noted, “when leaders fail to lead, the people will lead, and the rest will follow,” with those words, he inspired individuals to find solutions to these crises by giving students the gift of optimism, a mantra for which he himself is well-known. Ultimately, he challenged students to join in the “struggle for a fairer and more peaceful world.”

Director of the UN Studies Specialization and former Assistant Secretary-General, Elisabeth Lindenmayer moderated questions. Students jumped at the opportunity to pose vexing questions to Annan. Common themes resonated and were concurrent with the dilemmas that UN Studies Specializers are working towards trying to untangle every day in their classrooms, such as the Syrian crisis, UN reform, climate change, and countering violent extremism. Other questions originated from personal interests and displayed critical analysis of particular issues, such as the role of women in conflict resolution or the role of China and India in a new world order. Still, others pushed boundaries by asking the questions that nobody seems to ask, like “do you find it ironic that the P-5 of the Security Council are the largest weapons dealers in the world?”

Annan had many poignant words of wisdom and insight over the course of the evening. He was almost poetic as he called for less violence, cautioning the world against the use of nuclear weapons saying their use would “lead the living to envy the dead.” He discussed the rise of emerging powers, whom he described as “still finding their feet,” alongside a decline in Western hegemony. Wealth and power are becoming more diffused with the rise of what some call, “the rest.” International relations are, as a result, becoming more complex with more partners at the table, including changing contributors of global, regional and even local players. Finally, as he has often done before, he called for the continued empowerment of women - empowerment of women within conflict regions, within positions of power at the UN and most importantly, he called for the long overdue appointment of a woman as the next Secretary-General.

The illustrious former Secretary-General received student questions with keen understanding and honest reflection. His responses wove together personal stories, such as his experience with crisis in East Timor and Tiananmen Square. To all points, he responded with a forward-thinking, positive attitude that imbued upon the students a sense of cause and empowerment. “We all,” he accentuated, “can be leaders in the resolution of many of these problems, whether it be climate change or gender equality.” Through his calm, confident demeanor, Annan inspired the 250 students listening to depart on their individual journeys, confronting world issues with renewed determination and optimism.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda

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In addition to urgent calls for action, strong recommendations were made for the increased involvement of women in countries affected by conflicts. These calls came from the President of Female Solidarity for Integrated Peace and Development (SOFEPADI) in the DRC, the Director of the Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq and the founder of the Voice of Libyan Women in Libya – all describing their experiences on the ground within their home countries. For them, these issues are personal and the lack of support in the field jeopardizes their security and that of many other women. They described frustration that women’s access to the negotiating table continues to be refused, as women are told that they are not party to the conflict, and yet they continue to be the victims of systemic conflict-exacerbated abuses (rape, slavery, imprisonment and assassination). Their harrowing accounts and fervent calls to action for the Security Council were deeply moving and reflective of a world that has not yet realized the value of half its population.

The day’s highlight was the Security Council’s unanimous adoption of Resolution 2242, which re-established the importance of the agenda for Women, Peace, and Security globally and, inter alia encourage the forthcoming Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism through the integration of women, including their participation, leadership and empowerment to counter and prevent violent extremism as a core United Nations strategy and response. There were a number of important moments and statements made by various representatives and Member States, however, a few stood out as particularly poignant. One of them came from the Prime Minister of Spain and President of the Security Council, “in conflict it is often more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier,” he said solemnly. The impact of those words on the audience was very visible, particularly among the students, most of whom never having experienced a conflict first hand, and many taking security for granted.

The Security Council visit brought to life the topics studied on a daily basis and at the same time offered a view into the real people and places significantly impacted by the work of the Security Council and the United Nations.
Resolution on Syria
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As final negotiations ensued, the JIM presented new information that another chemical weapons attack had just occurred, this time against the Government of Syria and perpetrated by ISIS. This event was a game changer, and the Security Council regained its unity around the issue of terrorism. A new resolution was negotiated and ultimately passed around 2:00 a.m. with 14 votes in favor and one abstention. Ultimately, the resolution made a number of recommendations, including the adoption of an arms embargo against the supply of chemical weapons and the creation of a UN task force to report within 90 days on the issue of accountability.

The simulation was a great learning experience which gave students a firsthand understanding of the internal dynamics of the Security Council, the underlying power struggle between member state’s national interests and the complexities of international relations.

In preparation for the simulation, Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer, Director of UNS Specialization, brings SIPA students to the UN for a briefing on Syria.

Upcoming Events

In Spring 2016 the competitive "Day at UN" initiative will begin. In its 6th year, 37 students were accepted and will have the opportunity to work within different offices and divisions at the United Nations.

Congratulations to the deserving students who were awarded this opportunity and stay tuned for full coverage in the next issues of UNS Wire.