

National Model United Nations

University of St. Gallen
Delegation 2012



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Documentation

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Representing a relatively unknown state at one of the largest United Nations simulations in the world may sound like some sort of funny game at first glance. Our 14 Bachelor students at the University of St.Gallen soon found out, that in multilateral negotiations, it takes more than a smile to be successful.

Building up solid background knowledge about the UN, researching countries' positions, practicing public speaking and getting into the depth of multilateral negotiations formed the framework of this year's National Model United Nations class.

Our highly motivated students did not only reach these goals, but also received awards in the category of Honorable Delegation as well as for Outstanding Position Papers.

Moreover, for me as a Head Delegate it was a pleasure to witness the personal development of the students throughout this academic year. To see them confidently holding speeches in a foreign language in front of hundreds of people, negotiating patiently, always displaying diplomatic manners made me very proud of each of them.

Thanks to your generous contribution, our students were able to participate at the NMUN conference in New York. We would therefore like to sincerely thank you again for supporting us and for making this unique experience possible!



Theresia Langosz
Head Delegate

Introduction

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Welcome

Playing games is one of the best ways, in our experience, to learn swiftly and effectively. The National Model United Nations Conference that takes place every year in New York is probably the biggest game organised for students. Thousands of students from all over the world gather in New York to simulate the United Nations and to hammer out solutions to the world's most pressing problems.

We went to New York with 14 student delegates, one head delegate, and one faculty advisor to represent the tiny Caribbean island state of Grenada. The challenge and the expectations were high: after months of training, writing, speaking, visits to Berne and Geneva, and an in-house simulation we had to keep our minds free for true dialogue and unbiased solutions.

The learning curve in New York was steep. First came the shock. Nothing prepares you for the US American student that jumps up on his chair and shouts out to gather all American states. Then came adaptation. We quickly adjusted to the circumstances, found out with whom it was well worth working (generally those who were well prepared – like us), and foraged for common ground for solutions. Then came success. Our speeches were heard and our proposals were reflected in final drafts – not all of them, but some. And we even received some of those elusive awards, which we have never considered as the principal aim, but now see as the reward for the good work of all of the team.

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The atmosphere at the olympic games of New York – as one might call the National Model UN Conference – was truly fantastic: at least as good as it will be this summer at the true Olympic Games in London. And now there is the same lingering sense of fascination and satisfaction, a flame of excitement that keeps on burning much as it will in the UK this autumn. But the wheel keeps on turning and the torch must be passed on. The challenge for us now is to transfer this sense of fascination to the next generation. Project NMUN 2013 has already taken off with an information session. Elation and excitement were tangible: a crowd of more than 60 students pressed into a room, which we had intended to host about 20 future model UN students, to hear about our experience and the project to come.

We intend to keep the wheel turning for many years to come. Continuity will be guaranteed, as Theresia Langosz and Thomas Burri are again in charge of the course. Cooperation between the MUN Club at HSG – the student initiative to promote Model United Nations of all sorts – will be enhanced in the coming year. We intend to keep up the dual approach (a university course with credits, and a student initiative with a freer appeal), but profit more one from another. Thus we will pass on the flame of excitement, so that as many students as possible can experience in the years to come what it means to learn through the game of National Model United Nations.

Welcome



Prof. Thomas Burri
Assistant Professor in
International and European
Law

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Course Work

Being a group of 14 carefully selected undergraduate students for the NMUN Delegation 2012, we were highly motivated for the beginning of our preparation courses in September. During class, we studied the functioning of the United Nations, discussed resolutions, and practised our negotiating skills. Over the course of the semester, each delegate had to write an interesting and convincing paper about a “hot” issue in world politics, such as arms trade or the garbage mafia. Additionally, we had to present each topic in class – and the fact that our speeches were recorded on camera and then analysed made us much more nervous than usual!

Besides the preparation work, we had to devote some time to organizational matters. First of all, we had to decide which country we wanted to represent at the NMUN Conference. After long debates, we managed to agree on a set of three preferences which we then sent to New York. Soon after, we were honoured by being assigned to the small Caribbean island state of Grenada. Since this was our first choice, everybody was happy and started researching Grenada and its positions on various issues at the UN. The delegates teamed up in pairs and chose a committee in which they would represent Grenada in New York. Until February, each team very thoroughly researched Grenada’s positions on the topics on the agenda of their respective committees and summarized them in a Position Paper, which was then sent to New York.

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The last step of our preparation work was a mock simulation that was conducted on a Saturday about a month prior to the actual simulation. It turned out that this additional practise was exceedingly useful, especially for those delegates that had never participated in a UN simulation before. Although we had been through the complicated and very formal NMUN Rules of Procedure in class, there was still a fair bit of confusion left. But this was easily remedied with the help of experienced “MUN veterans” and by actually applying the rules ourselves. That way, we felt very well-prepared to face the great challenge – successfully representing Grenada at NMUN in New York.

Special Activities in Switzerland

Visit to the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva

Beyond the formal work that took place in the course, we also were a team that needed to build strong bonds in order to have the greatest and most fruitful collaboration during the conference in New York. A perfect opportunity for this was our visit to the UN Headquarters in Geneva. It gave us an insight into where the people whose roles we would play work, a chance to see where historical agreements have been reached and negotiations held – from the Salle des Pas Perdus to the Human Rights Council Room – as well as providing us with an excellent opportunity for team-building on a boattrip on the Lac Léman, which inspired our collective NMUN Spirit!



Beate Kainberger
Delegate in the Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20)

The Preparation Course

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Meeting with Dr. Valentin Zellweger in Berne

Before leaving for New York we met with several ambassadors and diplomats; just the people whose roles we would have to play at the conference. Our meeting in Berne with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs started with a round of general questions about their lives as diplomats and their everyday tasks. We were then joined by Dr. Valentin Zellweger, Head of the Public International Law division. The meeting that followed was quite different to what we were used to. Instead of simply talking about international law and giving us the opportunity to ask questions, he asked us to name a current issue in world politics that had some connection with international law. He then proceeded to ask us questions about these issues to illustrate the questions he himself is regularly asked in his function as head of Switzerland's Public International Law division. This gave us an insight into the principles and key issues of international law as well as the mechanisms of how international law is used in political crises.

Meeting with H.E. J. Stähelin in St. Gallen

Shortly after the meeting in Berne, we had the pleasure of meeting Mr. J. Stähelin, former Ambassador of Switzerland to Japan and first-ever Swiss ambassador to the United Nations in 2002. Beyond his impressive resume, Mr. Stählin mainly talked to us about his intense and exciting year in New York as Permanent Observer of Switzerland to the United Nations in New York with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, a position he held until Switzerland's admission to the UN in September 2002. The role he played at that time was crucial as he was laying the foundations of what is today the Swiss Mission in New York. As the only Swiss representative at that time, he had to meet with all the other Member States' ambassadors and defend Switzerland's foreign policies. After his fascinating speech, we had the chance to ask him some questions about his life as a diplomat but also about what goes on behind the curtain of formal international diplomacy.



Samuel Cobbi
Delegate to UNESCO

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A Day in the Life of a NMUN Delegate

Bip bip. Bip bip. Bip bip. Morning call in the hotel room. Time to wake up and put on my black suit! No time for breakfast. Let's run downstairs for a coffee, hoping that the elevators will show some mercy and still have enough space for us to get on. To make it clear: If a session ends and you want to go upstairs, don't even try to get an empty elevator! Strategies need to be developed, stairs need to be used... everything is combined to make it an adventure! Happily we – my co-delegate and me – arrived just in time for the session: “- Greece”, “- Present and voting”, “- Grenada”, “- Present”, “- Guatemala”, “- Present”... Every session begins with a roll call which lasts roughly 15 minutes.

“- Are there any motions on the floor at this time? Grenada, to what point do you rise?” “- Grenada moves for a suspension of the meeting for a period of 30 minutes for the purpose of caucusing.”

Some from my delegation complained about how often the session was interrupted by motions, such as motions to reduce the speakers' time. These always need two speeches in favour, two against. Our formal session never lasted longer than 15 minutes, just enough time to listen to three or four speakers and vote on motions. Then we were in informal session again.

Groups formed quickly. We worked together with the South American states on drafting a first working paper concerning scope. Things went well, until the moment they decided to use a negative definition for the scope of the Arms Trade Treaty instead of a positive one. The difference? A negative definition is very difficult to define and defend, as everyone wishing to adopt

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the draft would have to agree on one exhaustive list of weapons. Frustration, debate, negotiations.

In the long run, my co-delegate and I found it much more efficient to go around separately, as there were so many working papers being written due to the fact that all of the seven segments of the treaty were to be covered at the same time. Splitting up made us more efficient as we had more influence in different topics because both of us got involved in different discussions. From time to time we looked for each other in order to exchange newest information and reach decisions about which positions to take. There is only one rule during informal session: If you don't want to feel lost, get involved!

After the last session of the day, all 14 members of the delegation met in the lobby with the advisor and the head delegate in order to exchange information and impressions, to make sure we are still alive... and possibly to make plans to go out for the evening. But a day in the life of an NMUN delegate has no end: Even in your dreams you keep on negotiating and defending your country's position.



Fiona Waldburger
Delegate in the Conference
on the Arms Trade Treaty

NMUN Conference in New York

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Special Activities in New York

During the conference, limited time and the volume of our work made it difficult to find an opportunity for activities outside the conference rooms. But even though everyone was tired after long and exhausting Committee Sessions, we were more than happy to be invited to the Swiss Mission to the UN and to the Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Delegation to the UN, Mr Walter Füllemann. This gave us an excellent occasion to compare our NMUN experiences with the customs of real world diplomacy at the United Nations Headquarters.

At the Swiss Mission, we gained important insights into the most current topics that Switzerland is engaging in on the international level. We were also able to ask questions about the average day in the life of a diplomat (lots of meetings, informal talks and conference sessions) and about the preparations for the upcoming UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

At the Permanent Mission of the ICRC, even the tiniest prejudice about diplomats being boring and much too technical was eradicated completely. Even though the meeting took place immediately after the last committee session and everybody felt like falling asleep, Mr Füllemann was the centre of our attention when he told us about his practical experiences in the field. Especially interesting was the notion that ICRC representatives always have to be completely impartial and only care about helping the victims, no matter whose fault the violent conflict in question is and who the aggressor is.



Eva Altmann

Delegate in the Conference
on the Arms Trade Treaty

NMUN Conference in New York

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HANIEL STIFTUNG

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Visiting the EDA in Berne



Impressions

Winning an Award



Boat Trip on Lake Geneva



At the United Nations in Geneva