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MUNs as a tool to empower youth

From simulating the UN to making a difference in the real world

By Julia Roberti and Gabriela Nunes Pinto



"It is rewarding to personally challenge the status quo and push for positive changes", said Mrs. Vida Gala.



"Listen to what is being discussed and bring it to your lives", said Ms. Stradiotto.

Model United Nations (MUNs) were created even before the own foundation of the United Nations: inspired by the Declaration by United Nations (in 1942), MUNs have proven to be an effective tool to inspire the youth and provide them with a healthy environment for debates. Participants can share their points of view, develop empathy, and learn how to negotiate and coordinate different interests.

Young people play an important role in shaping the future. After all, they are the next generation of leaders and decision-makers responsible for reassuring cooperation, peace, and security among States and societies, and MUNs are a tool for developing skills necessary for these positions. During simulations, students are encouraged to take the center stage: they study the topics on their own to understand the positions they have to defend; they learn how to negotiate and find a common ground together with students that may have different opinions and interests; and they struggle to reach consensus and find creative solutions for global problems.

As stated by the Brazilian Ambassador, Ms. Irene Vida Gala, MUNs can take students out of their comfort zones, and introduce them to "the fascinating world of international relations and diplomacy". When the youth is interested in politics, they can act as agents of change: "Youth can voice their indignation and unease regarding issues that others have already got used to",

complemented Ms. Vida Gala. Politics means debating different opinions and simulations teach students how to understand and tolerate differences and to create bridges to reach a common goal, enhancing cooperation.

Inspired by these beliefs, and motivated to shape a better future, since 2018 Ms. Vida Gala coordinates with Itamaraty the project MONUEM. The project offers MUNs in public schools in São Paulo, Brazil, bringing students close to the topics of the international agenda, stimulating their inclusion in the exercise of finding solutions for global problems.

Also involved in simulations since High School, FAMUN 2020 Secretary-General, Ms. Luiza Stradiotto, stated that simulations are challenging - especially in the online format -, but they are a great opportunity to acquire new knowledge about subjects we usually do not see in the classroom. She believes that MUNs can create a positive environment for dialogue, tolerance, and stimulate critical thinking, which are the most important elements to foster peace among people.

Considering all this, MUNs are also an opportunity for students to better define their sense of global citizenship because it encourages them to defend values based on a culture of peace, which is essential for the international society to shape a better future together.

HIGH SCHOOL Committees and Councils

UNSC 1

By Bárbara Caroline Rodrigues Marques

Council Members advanced to reach an agreement in most of the content of their draft resolution. They focused on education as a central point of the agenda. However, some important aspects, such as the negative stereotypes faced by youth, still need to be further addressed.

During the stakeouts, the Dominican Republic, when asked about the missing points on the resolution, claimed that the SC is “working one step at a time”. Russia stated that older people should hold the position of leaders in the decision-making process instead of young people, since they are easily influenced by extremist ideologies.

Also, the Council had to face a crisis: the poisoning of the Russian politician and anti-corruption activist, Mr. Navalny, allegedly carried out by the government of Russia. Both Russia and Germany, where Mr. Navalny is being assisted, insisted on leading the investigations. The Council has agreed that no country should be accused until further investigations are conducted.

UNSC 2

By Bianca Porcari Corraça

Belgium and the Dominican Republic had a misunderstanding about the impact of the COVID-19 crisis in the political scenario in Burundi, since the Dominican Republic stated the outbreak had no relation with the crisis.

Also, during stakeouts, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which opposed the SC remaining seized on the matter, informed the Press that they were still willing to reach a resolution with the other countries, because “there is no reason for the Council to exist if it does not want a solution at all”. Germany did not answer the Press regarding the request of Burundi to receive reparation to the colonial period.

Also, the UK suggested that the SC should look forward, proposing an economic alliance for the industrial development at the Burundian territory, so the country can reduce its reliance on subsistence farming. Belgium reasserted the importance of looking beyond the political issue, stressing the necessity of solving the present problems instead of focusing on the past.

UNGA 1

By Gabriela Nunes Pinto

Arms control was once again the focus of the debate. Austria stressed the challenge of dealing with the dual-use of technology, reinforcing the importance of applying these advances only for civilian ends. Hence, it is important to regulate the military use of technology, but regulation cannot harm the access to technologies that are also applied for beneficial purposes. In turn, UK said that it is not only the number of armaments that need to be controlled but also their destruction capacity. A similar idea used to be expressed by India during the 1990s. Cuba stated that arms control must take into account inequality among States, which also affects their capacity to guarantee their own security. Similarly, Egypt reinforced that multilateralism is a key aspect to advance on concrete measures on disarmament.

UNGA 2

By Santiago Nuri Fernandes

In the discussion of the amendments, Ethiopia, on behalf of the G-77, showed concern about the low rhythm of implementation of SDG 2, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which can still get worse. Australia, Germany, and Japan responded to this concern with a commitment to cooperating and planning for food security in face of big crises, such as the pandemic. Delegates could not reach an agreement on the proposal of Jamaica to give more emphasis on the nexus between climate change, conflicts and food insecurity. The delegate also called for greater compliance with environmental laws, which had an objection from Japan. Nevertheless, consensus was reached on the proposal of Germany and Australia, which encouraged the participation of women in sustainable agriculture development, through inclusion programs.

UNHRC

By Patricia Kuae Neves

Both political groups discussed the amendments, but there was a conflict about priorities. While the NAM proposed amendments to include and emphasize, mostly, the human rights of refugees, the EU was concerned about other vulnerable groups affected by climate change. But, the most conflicted amendment was about national policies for migrants and refugees presented by Australia, on behalf of the EU and others, who insisted on respecting countries' sovereignty. In turn, Namibia, representing the NAM, defended that there should be an international policy to welcome migrants and refugees, since only national policies would not be enough to protect them. By consensus, they agreed on emphasizing the respect of human rights for migrants and refugees through national policies, according to international treaties.

UNIVERSITY Committees and Councils

UNSC

By Bianca Porcari Corraça

If Council Members cannot agree with each other during negotiations, how do they intend to resolve such a delicate issue as the Burundian situation? During the stakeout, France mentioned there is a lack of union among SC Members towards this topic. The delegate expressed his concerns about the situation in the country, but also criticized the Council for spending too much time blocking amendments instead of discussing concrete solutions for Burundi. He also stated that France stands with the revolutionary principles of “*liberté, égalité and fraternité*” when dealing with the topic. Also during negotiations, delegates, especially of France and China, had a hard time finding the right language for the resolution. As president of the Council, Niger intervened saying that people are dying in Burundi, so there is not much time to spend discussing words.

The Burundian election and its legitimacy was a controversial subject in the SC’s debate today. Russia reinforced the fact that an election did happen, which is an important progress for the country’s political situation. Similarly, the USA stated they believe in the future of the country with the new government, contrasting with the French position, that does not recognize the new president’s legitimacy. France said there is no evidence that the electoral process was truly democratic and transparent. In fact, the absence of International Organizations monitoring the elections is an aspect that concerns Member States, since the only information they have come from the Burundian government.

Belgium suggested that the SC should focus on problems they can actually solve. The Belgian representative stated that the UN needs to support regional dialogue and cooperation, something that was also reinforced by Tunisia. As an African country, Tunisia recognized his country’s role in this mediation process and suggested and praised the role of the African Union.

ILO

By Julia Roberti

In the second and third sittings, delegates were able to reach consensus in a number of amendments. A significant exception was an amendment in the preamble proposed by the Workers bloc, recognizing the groups which are more affected by violence and harassment. Workers defended the use of the word “adversely” to highlight the negative and long-term impact of such acts in workers’ lives. While the term was strongly opposed by the Employers bloc, the EU, even agreeing with the amendment, argued that the issue was so important to be only part of the preamble: for the delegate of France, this should be mentioned in a specific section, with operative provisions. In the section of Definitions and Scope, the Workers and Employers blocs agreed on merging their amendments about the definition of violence and sexual harassment, which should consider all “groups directly or indirectly employed”. However, the Employers bloc was against including students visiting a workplace in the definition of groups affected because employers cannot be held accountable for incidents with people they do not have a formal contract with. Despite these divergences, delegates are willing to put their differences aside to draft a comprehensive Convention on the matter.

UNHRC

By Carolina Tanaka

In the second and third sessions of the University HRC, delegates discussed the proposed amendments in their respective political groups - NAM and others, and the EU and others - and tried to reach a common ground concerning their priorities in the negotiation. A lot of paragraphs were marked with “agreed ad ref”, and it seemed that the majority of the HRC Members was willing to reach a consensus on the topic. Notwithstanding, they had different positions regarding the amendment proposed by the delegate of Denmark, who wanted to include racial and ethnic minorities and the LGBTQIA+ community in the group of people that are most susceptible to have their human rights threatened by climate change. Somalia alongside Bangladesh and the Bahamas disagreed with the amendment by stating that, due to economic factors, other groups were more affected by the impacts of climate change and poverty. Bangladesh proposed an amendment that highlighted that developed countries have a huge role in contributing financially with the impacts of climate change, which caused many divergent opinions among delegates. Overall the majority of HRC Members agreed with the changes proposed the amendment and were willing to cooperate in order to reach a consensus.

The reality of those forced to flee their homes

The UNHRC MUN Refugee Challenge calls students to stand up for refugees rights

By Patricia Kuae Neves and Carolina Tanaka

A lot of reasons force people to flee their homes, such as conflicts, natural disasters, or a situation of massive violation of human rights. Refugees are entitled to protection in these situations, however, fake news about forced displacement have fostered toxic narratives against them and contributed to xenophobia and the violation of their human rights, such as the right to employment and education. "We tend to fear what we don't know, so the youth can play a role in breaking preconceived ideas by allowing the communities - host communities and refugees - to meet each other", said Mr. Fabiano Sartori de Campos, UNHCR Environmental Field Adviser.

Conscious about the role of the youth in standing up for the rights of refugees, the UNHCR - the UN Refugee Agency - launched a challenge calling all MUNs to debate forced displacement, and FAMUN is participating in the challenge with the simulation of the topic "Human rights and climate change" in the HRC.

The importance of this challenge is to stimulate the youth in providing accurate information about forced displacement - after all, being a refugee is not a choice, since they are forced to flee -; and the real impact of refugees on the economy. Most importantly, youth can be a channel to raise the voice of refugees, just like Mr. Sartori explained: "Instead of telling their stories, we should work to give them the chance to build their own narrative. So, students can establish channels so the refugees and migrants can express their ideas and tell us their trajectory".

Coming up next...



SUNDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2020

PHOTO OF THE DAY

High School

- 09:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. | Session 4
- 10:30 a.m. - 01:30 p.m. | Lunch Break
- 01:30 p.m. - 02:30 p.m. | Session 5
- 02:30 p.m. - 03:30 p.m. | Break
- 03:30 p.m. - 04:30 p.m. | Closing Plenary
- 04:30 p.m. - 05:45 p.m. | Closing Ceremony

University

- 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. | Session 4
- 12:30 p.m. - 01:30 p.m. | Lunch Break
- 01:30 p.m. - 02:30 p.m. | Session 5
- 02:30 p.m. - 03:30 p.m. | Break
- 03:30 p.m. - 04:30 p.m. | Closing Plenary
- 04:30 p.m. - 05:45 p.m. | Closing Ceremony



High School delegate of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines during the stakeout on the situation in Burundi
Photographer: Gisele Bertinato



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