

2019 Speaker Series

World Information Transfer

Promoting Health and Environmental Literacy



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INTRODUCTION

Hosted by World Information Transfer, Inc., (WIT) an NGO in general status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN/ECOSOC), the annual Speaker Series was a defining component of the organization's Summer Internship Program. With the opportunity to hear from professionals in a diverse array of fields, ranging from international diplomacy to public health, interns gained a plethora of knowledge and insight into speakers' experiences. This report summarizes the 2019 Speaker Series.

CONTRIBUTORS

Supervisor:	Dr. Christine K. Durbak, Founder and Chair, WIT
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MS. MARIAM AZARM

FOUNDER OF KLOSTERS INNOVATION PARTNERS, FORMER INTERNATIONAL EVENTS AND CONFERENCE MANAGER AT THE UNITED NATIONS



Sitting: Ms. Mariam Azarm to the left of Dr. Christine K. Durbak

Standing from left to right: (first row) Peggy Lau, Ikonii Chiabi, June Hong, Eunyoun Jang, Jenifer Miller, Izabela Zawartka, (second row) Hyunbin Shin, Winky Lee, Yung-Hsuan Wu, Jeremy Tong, Edward Landzberg

On the first day of the Summer Internship Program, the interns were given a tour of the United Nations New York Headquarters by one of its former Events and Conference Managers and close friend of WIT, Ms. Mariam Azarm. Kindly dedicating her time, Ms. Azarm spent the afternoon introducing the structure and everyday operations of this esteemed international organization.

With their official grounds passes freshly printed, interns were shown around the building of the United Nations. First, Ms. Azarm presented the General Assembly building, subsequently moving on to the Conference Rooms; three official Chambers for the Economic and Social, Trusteeship, and Security Councils; and Secretariat Building. This overview equipped tour participants with the necessary familiarity to undertake their program with full preparation.

Furthermore, Ms. Azarm provided a comprehensive overview of the structural design of the United Nations. Through the official Blue Book, interns were offered insight into the scope and diversity of sub-organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and functional bodies constituting the operative framework of the New York Headquarters. Furthermore, the role of each of the six Main Committees of the General Assembly were explained, and important facts such as the official languages and current Secretary-General were shared.

Interns were fortunate enough to meet with Ms. Azarm once again, as she devoted additional time to meet with them for a review of final reflections after the program's end. Discussing each individual's perceptions of the United Nations, preferred sub-organizations within the UN system, and observations regarding its functions, interns voiced the valuable takeaway of the World Information Transfer Summer Internship program.

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Azarm offered an informative and inspirational message. Encouraging the interns to take what they had learned from their summer experience, she affirmed that we should take into consideration our newly gained knowledge and connections in order to plan a meaningful career path for the future. We thank Ms. Azarm for her engagement throughout this summer.

MR. TAJ HAMAD

CHAIRMAN OF THE WORLD ASSOCIATION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS



Sitting: Mr. Taj Hamad to the right of Dr. Christine K. Durbak

Standing from left to right: (first row) Izabela Zawartka, Ikonii Chiabi, Peggy Lau, June Hong, Jenifer Miller, Eunyoung Jang, Yung-Hsuan Wu, (second row) Hyunbin Shin, Jeremy, Winky Lee, Edward Landzberg

Mr. Taj Hamad is the Chairman of the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO). Originally from Sudan, he began working with the United Nations in 1996. At the

outset, Mr. Hamad discussed the importance of human cooperation by introducing the recent African Continental Free Trade Agreement. The biggest regional free trade contract in the history of the African Union, it was the result of contribution and joint action of 54 participating nations. Subsequently, Mr. Hamad drew a similarity to the moon exploration, as this great achievement was made possible by global collaboration.

Mr. Hamad placed great emphasis on recognizing personal potential, inspiring the interns to take steps towards the achievement of their goals. In an inspiring and uplifting tone, interns were encouraged to believe in the uniqueness of their special skill-set and personality, as there is no one else exactly like them in the world. All contributions are, thus, destined to be distinctively valuable. Furthermore, Mr. Hamad highlighted that each individual has a responsibility to contribute to improving others' lives. In the context of the United Nations, this requires each of us to exercise empathy when developing plans for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. As information and technology develop, their power must be harnessed to fulfill a vast array of global needs and world visions.

The topic of happiness was tied into the conversation, as Mr. Hamad put forth his philosophy that a shared experience of this feeling can magnify universal satisfaction and enjoyment. From a psychological approach, it was purported that we feel happiness because unhappiness allows us to perceive a contrast between negative and positive feelings. Yet, according to Mr. Hamad, happiness should not be constantly pursued, not through material possessions, but through an understanding of personal value and determination of one's true identity. Once one becomes self-confident in these ways, they can better contribute to the enhancement of the lives of those around them. The United Nations system provides a wonderful platform for individuals to engage in this undertaking.

In answering intern questions, Mr. Hamad underscored our underlying similarities. How we feel happiness, anger, and miserableness is essentially the same. Each of us wants to be happy, yet unknowingly place an obstacle to its achievement by failing to acknowledge our ability to work with others towards this same goal.

To conclude, the speaker urged that interns should not be afraid of making mistakes. He pointed out that in many childhood experiences, such as learning how to walk or ride a bicycle, falling down only served to help us move forward. We have taken this message to heart, and would like to thank Mr. Hamad for his stimulating and influential talk.

DR. BRIAN LANDZBERG

CLINICAL ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, MEDICINE DIVISION OF GASTROENTEROLOGY &
HEPATOLOGY, WEILL MEDICAL COLLEGE OF CORNELL UNIVERSITY



Sitting: Dr. Brian Landzberg to the right of Dr. Christine K. Durbak

Standing from left to right: (first row) Ikonii Chiabi, Eunyoun Jang, Izabela Zawartka, Peggy, Jenifer Miller,
(second row) Edward Landzberg, Winky Lee, Jeremy, Yung-Hsuan Wu, Hyunbin Shin

Dr. Brian Landzberg is a clinical assistant professor at the Medicine Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology of Weill Medical College of Cornell University. As a guest to the 2019 Speaker's Series, he shared his insights into traveler's diarrhea to better equip WIT interns with the knowledge necessary to protect themselves when abroad. He emphasized the importance of knowledge regarding digestive disorders, particularly prevalent for visitors of developing countries.

During his presentation, Dr. Landzberg provided an overview of traveler's diarrhea. There are two types of this disorder, he stated, namely acute diarrhea (ATD) and persistent diarrhea (PTD). Ten to forty percent of travelers visiting developing countries in Latin America, parts of Caribbean, Southern Asia and Africa suffer from the former illness, whereas three to seventeen percent of these ATD patients then develop PTD such as post-infectious irritable bowel syndrome. Symptoms of ATD, which include developing three or more unformed stools per twenty four hours, and suffering from abdominal cramps, tenesmus, nausea, vomiting, fever or faecal urgency, usually start manifesting shortly after the travelers embark on a trip, and subside after four to five days when untreated. Among those who contract ATD, ten percent will suffer for more than ten days, with a rare minority developing chronic diarrhea.

Men and women share an equal chance of contracting ATD, while the youth is more vulnerable to ATD than the older individuals, considering the fact that younger individuals are more likely to be adventurous with their food choices and tend to consume more food per meal.

Dr. Landzberg then explained the environmental factors influencing traveler's diarrhea, with restaurant hygiene being the main risk carrier. He emphasised that a reduction in the incidence of traveler's diarrhea is more closely tied with the level of sanitation at the destination. Customers of street vendors are greatly prone to traveler's diarrhea, and 5-star hotels have a surprisingly high ATD rate, especially when it comes to buffet-style food that has been exposed to a warm environment. Less developed parts of the world, such as India and Mexico, mark where high risk of ATD contraction can be found as these regions tend to offer poor access to electricity, plumbing or outhouses. Last but not least, unclean water acts as a threat multiplier, as less handwashing and a greater exposure of food products to contaminated water present a challenge to curbing traveler's diarrhea is enhanced. He also highlighted how individuals are more likely to get ATD when visiting friends and relatives as a result of inappropriate handling of food.

Dr. Landzberg reminded the interns that gastroenteritis is inversely related to the income level of the destination visited. To be specific, ATD decreases in locations with improving economies and tourism infrastructure. On a global scale, the ATD incidence has fallen from a sixty-five percent two decades ago, to rates ranging from ten percent to forty percent today. That is, empowering developing countries helps travelers from all around the world.

In regard to prevention, bismuth subsalicylate is one of the many pills that can be taken to protect travelers from ATD. With the exception of cholera, there is currently no vaccine available for preventing bacteria-caused traveler's diarrhea, though antibiotics are offered as an alternative. Dr. Landzberg, however, warned us that in spite of their effectiveness, it is best for doctors not to prescribe antibiotics for ATD, as there are many possible side effects. Oral rehydration therapy, serving eight teaspoons of sugar with half a teaspoon of salt in a litre of safe water, is considered to be the most effective low-cost treatment towards traveler's diarrhea.

In conclusion, while antibiotics can be used to treat moderate to severe ATD, they are debated as a proper treatment for mild to moderate traveler's diarrhea. During vacation, individuals ought to take dietary and water precautions at all times, and remember to "boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it!"

DR. OKSANA LESHCHENKO

POLICY SPECIALIST AT THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)



Sitting: Dr. Oksana Leshchenko to the right of Dr. Christine K. Durbak
 Standing from left to right: (first row) Peggy Lau, Jenifer Miller, June Hong, (second row) Winky Lee, Jeremy Tong, Yung-Hsuan Wu, Izabela Zawartka

Dr. Oksana Leshchenko, a programme specialist for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), displayed her unwavering commitment to the improvement of global living standards during her discussion with WIT summer interns.

Dr. Leshchenko commenced the discussion with a brief overview of her early-life, a description of the mandate of UNDP, and a synopsis of the progression of her role within the organization. Born in Kyiv, Ukraine, Leshchenko remained in her motherland for her undergraduate studies. The completion of both her masters and PHD, however, brought her to Canada. Leshchenko's life shifted from a focus on academia to integration into UNDP and the UN system.

UNDP, Dr. Leshchenko described, serves as the development arm of the UN. With a broad mandate, the organization seeks to put human development and the individual at the core of its work, thus aiming to aid in the building of the sustainable livelihoods of those in need. The organization works with local, regional, and national governments of more than 170 countries and territories, thus differentiating it through a widespread presence. The mandate of UNDP, Leshchenko emphasized, truly started to shine with the procurement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as the organization no longer served in a coordinator capacity, but rather as an integrator for the achievement of the SDGs.

Dr. Leshchenko's career with UNDP began in 2001 with her occupation as the national officer in Ukraine. In this position, she focused on a Chornobyl recovery project and a development program. In the case of Chornobyl, she explained, UNDP focused on people and their needs on a demand basis. By going down to the community level and talking directly to those who felt affected by Chornobyl, UNDP was able to identify key issues. For one, it was concluded that many individuals were blaming their health problems, as well as their general misfortune on Chornobyl. As a result of these findings, UNDP also concluded that there was a general lack of correct and comprehensive literature concerning the actual facts of the incident.

Thus, Dr. Leshchenko explained, many initiatives were undertaken by the organization in order to combat these circumstances. To begin to overcome the presence of "victim syndrome," or the feeling of being a victim of Chornobyl, UNDP spread the message that the key for each individual's recovery was in their respective hands. Shortly the organization saw a shift in the individuals' mindsets from feeling like victims, to feeling like survivors. To surmount the lack of proper information, UNDP worked with other agencies to validate scientific issues, and then translated them into a simple language and was communicated through sources that people trusted such as local administrators, teachers, and media. Soon after, a new project was initiated at UNDP Ukraine in order to apply the same methodology worldwide. This initiative highlighted how countries, especially those neighboring one another and therefore facing many of the same conditions, could learn from each other.

Dr. Leshchenko's role within the UNDP then shifted to a focus on landmines, providing her with an opportunity to further demonstrate the UNDP mandate—a consistent focus on people. Land mines, Dr. Leshchenko emphasized, though seemingly presenting a different challenge than did Chornobyl, actually overlapped with the prior project in many ways. In both areas, contamination had created undesirable land, and therefore created harmful psychological effects on the inhabitants.

In reference to UNDP's relationship with local authorities, Leshchenko emphasized that there is sometimes a perception by local authorities that UNDP might be trying to undermine their actions. In order to mitigate this possibility, she stated, it is important to present the authorities with information about how a project would be beneficial for them, most often by showing them how active people, and an empowered community would improve life for individuals in their community.

DR. PATRICIA MYSKOWSKI

MEMBER OF MEMORIAL SLOAN KETTERING CANCER CENTER AND WEILL
CORNELL MEDICINE



Sitting: Dr. Patricia Myskowski to the left of Dr. Christine K. Durbak

Standing from left to right: (first row) Winky Lee, Ikonii Chiabi, Peggy Lau, Jenifer Miller, Izabela Zawartka,
(second row) Jeremy Tong, Eunyoung Jang, Yung-Hsuan Wu, Hyunbin Shin, Edward Landzberg

As the fourth guest of the Speaker Series, Dr. Patricia Myskowski was invited to the World Information Transfer Office on July 11th, 2019. Following a presentation of Dr. Myskowski's work regarding the effects of radiation on global health, interns put forth questions regarding this critical issue.

At the outset, Dr. Myskowski introduced the different types of radiation, focusing specifically on the various Ultraviolet (UV) waves which permeate the atmosphere and come into contact with human skin. Though their role in providing warmth, enabling photosynthesis, killing pathogens, and supplying vitamin D for mood elevation is regarded as necessary, UVA and UVB rays additionally contribute to sun damage for humans. The acute experience of sun burns or tans, thusly, are conducive to undesirable chronic effects such as photoaging or skin cancer.

With her background in dermatology, Dr. Myskowski focused the remainder of the presentation on skin cancer, a term encompassing the conditions of Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC), Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC), and the most severe, Malignant Melanoma. While its mortality rates are notably lower than those of other cancer variants, the incidence of skin cancer was noted to be rising as a result of ozone depletion, a decline of modesty in fashion trends,

and heightened recreational participation. The problem is, as described, the most prominent among people of a lighter complexion; inhabitants of Australia and New Zealand are particularly affected.

Specifically delving into the various types of skin cancer, Dr. Myskowski noted that the marks of BCC, associated with intermittent sun exposure, were often ignored and consequently untreated. Though similarly difficult to detect, SCC is, as explained, easier to contract in the presence of risk factors such as heat injury, smoking or immunosuppression, and it is more commonly seen among transplant recipients or those suffering from an infection. Outstandingly, the most parlous skin cancer manifestation, Melanoma, exhibited rising incidence rates in recent years. Due to the development and advancement of treatment methods, however, the fatality rate has fallen significantly. Other forms of UV radiation were touched on, as Dr. Myskowski contrasted the harmful practice of voluntary Artificial Radiation exposure and its beneficial application for therapeutic photomedicine to combat diseases like psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, and scleroderma. Accidental exposure, such as that engendered by the Chornobyl explosion, was explained to yield adverse acute and long-term effects as well.

Dr. Myskowski's concluding remarks were dedicated to the potency of prevention methods, most as simple as frequent, careful sunscreen application and conscientious attentiveness to unusually perceived skin changes. Interns' questions reflected a great interest in the content of the presentation, as audience members followed up on its various components. Notably, issues of skin-cancer related fatality, handling in developing countries, and further clarification on protection were addressed.

In conclusion, the Speaker Series session was rich and informative, and the World Information Transfer Summer Interns would like to express great gratitude to Dr. Myskowski for dedicating her time to visit.

DR. SCOTT RATZAN

SENIOR FELLOW, HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL



Sitting: Dr. Scott Ratzan to the right of Dr. Christine K. Durbak

Standing: (first row) Winky Lee, Izabela Zawartka, Ikonii Chiabi, Peggy Lau, (second row) Fred Yonghabi Jeremy Tong, Bryan Yiu, Jenifer Miller, Yung-Hsuan Wu

A passionate advocate of global public health, Dr. Scott Ratzan has spent over three decades promoting health literacy, mobile health communication (mHealth) and strategic health diplomacy. Coming from a diverse academic background, Dr. Ratzan aspires to bring together knowledge from different disciplines, identifying social determinants of health and improving communication between professionals and public society in order to optimize health outcomes.

In parallel with his academic background, Dr. Ratzan's career in advancing public health is equally fascinating as it is multifaceted. Before any private-sector engagements, Dr. Ratzan worked for the United States government in the Agency for International Development in Washington, DC, with the purpose of designing a framework for the Bureau of Global Health's communication efforts. Subsequently, after filling the position of Vice President of Global Health at Johnson & Johnson for 11 years, he assumed a role as the Vice President of Global Corporate Affairs in Anheuser-Busch InBev.

At the start of his presentation to the WIT interns, recalled the wide-spread stigma and discrimination faced by AIDS patients, most surprisingly by medical officers in emergency rooms in the 1990s. Dr. Ratzan brought in the topic of communication, a

major focus of his career, by underscoring the important role played by the United Nations in promoting health literacy to combat pursuant discrimination against AIDs.

Dr. Ratzan then highlighted one of the biggest public health threats currently facing society: “vaccine hesitancy,” or the general public’s reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the common accessibility. The World Health Organization has declared “vaccine hesitancy” as one of the ten greatest global threats to human health in 2019, alongside HIV, ebola and other high-threat pathogens. In a hyperconnected world, well-intended parents are easily prone to social media campaigns, TV episodes, posters, and word of mouth. Accordingly, the influence of the anti-vaccination movement, especially against preventable infectious diseases, threatens to reverse progress made in tackling diseases.

Touching on the policy-influencing area of his work, Dr. Ratzan also shared that traffic accidents tops the world’s cause of death for young adults aged 18-24, contributing to approximately 50% of death tolls. He explained how these accidents can be prevented by wearing seat belts, and thus, that countries’ law and regulations on seat belts remain fundamental in improving road safety and reducing deaths and injuries. Dr. Ratzan stated that he has been a part of “Together for Safer Roads,” an innovating coalition that brings together global private sector companies such as AT&T, Facebook, PepsiCo, and others to collaborate on improving road safety and reducing deaths and injuries sustained from road crashes.

Regarding the role of the private sector in pushing forward the achievement of SDGs, Dr. Ratzan stated that the public’s general negative impression of business toughens the private sector’s role in fulfilling social responsibility. Citing the successful project ‘Text4baby’ launched by Johnson & Johnson to provide mothers-to-be with updates about vaccinations and check-ups, he demonstrated how private sector innovation and expertise can help to advance social welfare. The impact of this meaningful project was exemplified by its further adoption in developing countries, with voice messages replacing texts to accommodate the countries’ specific needs.

Dr. Ratzan concluded his presentation by stating that the key to success is active engagement in dialogue with the private sector and most importantly, being creative in one’s aspirations. Whether it is the government, the private sector, or academia, he highlighted that each and every sector can help to contribute a positive difference. Dr. Ratzan underscored that he will continue to encourage young people who are passionate in advancing global health development to keep their eye on their goals and let the guiding stars be one’s values and ethics.

DR. MARK ROBSON

PROFESSOR AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND
BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES



Sitting: Dr. Mark Robson to the left of Dr. Christine K. Durbak

Standing: (first row) Izabela Zawartka, Ikonii Chiabi, June Hong, Jenifer Miller, Peggy Lau, (second row) Eunyoung Jang, Winky Lee, Jeremy Tong, Hyunbin Shin, Edward Landzberg, Yung-Hsuan Wu

Dr. Mark Robson is the Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor, Professor of Plant Biology and Pathology, and the Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health at Rutgers University in New Jersey. Professor Robson's presentation focused on the challenges and opportunities he witnessed in terms of agricultural environmental health throughout his career. Dr. Robson described himself as a "farm boy from rural New Jersey turned toxicologist." Though Dr. Robson focuses his studies on a plethora of poisons, he chose to zero in on pesticides for the purpose of his presentation. While detailing his work, the professor explained how it has included frequent travels to Asia and parts of West Africa with the intention of socializing and helping farmers who produce food in developing nations. Furthermore, he advises the aforementioned farmers on strategies allowing food growth for growing populations, while simultaneously avoiding the use of toxins and pesticides where possible.

Aside from addressing the issue of pesticides in the food eaten by the general population, Professor Robson also voiced concerns regarding the dangers of farmers being exposed to toxins. Thus, he explained how proper technology and protective gear are needed when handling pesticides. Unfortunately, he stated, there simply isn't enough funding to support this necessity as approximately 85% of the world is considered to be in the developing

stage. Instead, farmers often use less expensive alternatives such as cotton clothing as it absorbs perspiration or ski masks that cover a majority of one's face. Children of farmers are also at risk, particularly those in developing nations as their bodies are still developing, and they are often alongside their parents as they work, likely without the necessary protective gear. Another issue that was brought up was the lack of clean water in these developing countries. Many of them rely on wells to supply water, a source that often contains arsenic, a toxin that causes spotting of the melanin of one's skin, a phenomenon that can be deadly. Though a deeper well implies less arsenic, the construction of such a well, or the transportation of cleaner water requires adequate funding which is often not available to many communities. On this topic, Dr. Robson said that he hopes to expose the developing world to greater technological innovations that will keep both the food, and the producers of the food, in a more healthy state.

Dr. Robson then described the trips on which him and his university students often embark in order to educate both the students, as well as the inhabitants of those places he visits. While on these trips, he noted, his group will often visit local farms, and health clinics in order to be able to assist a greater sphere of individuals. As an example of the education he provides on his trips, he described a case study that he pursued in the Bang Rieng agricultural community in which he studied non-occupational pesticide exposure and risk assessment among preschool children.

While describing the many studies that he pursues while abroad, Dr. Robson also emphasized the importance of gathering accurate data, particularly in the case of dietary data. An example study done examined the average number of times children wash their hands. This brings up another example of how inaccurate studies can be if not conducted properly. Dr. Robson asked parents how many times they think their kids washed their hands and observed them throughout the day, finding that the parents were way off and that children wash less than expected. Aside from the bigger studies the team also did smaller ones such as dermal wipe sampling; this involves wiping hands and feet with two gauze pads with 1-2 ml of 10% isopropanol and observing what has contaminated farmers bodies after a normal day out in the fields.

While Dr. Robson has no plans to branch out to other parts of the world to conduct research there, he concluded his presentation by explaining how he wishes to focus on his areas of expertise and wishes to eventually see a day where nutrition is starting to be taught and encouraged more and where people will actually focus on pesticides in food production

DR. IGOR SHPINIOV

CHIEF OF OFFICE OF THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY
AND CONFERENCE MANAGEMENT



Pictured: (front row) Dr. Igor Shpiniov to the left of Dr. Christine K. Durbak, (middle row) June Hong, Ikonii Chiabi, Eunyoung Jang, Izabela Zawartka, Peggy Lau, Jenifer Miller, (back row) Winky Lee, Fred Yonghabi, Jeremy Tong, Yung-Hsuan Wu, Hyunbin Shin, Edward Landzberg

On the 30th floor of the Secretariat Building, Dr. Igor Shpiniov spoke to the WIT interns about his experiences as the Chief of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General. Starting as a translator in the United Nations, Dr. Shpiniov witnessed major changes in conference management in the world's largest multilateral institution over the years. Today, he leads the office and advises all the work of the department. Dr. Shpiniov provided insight into the crucial role of the department in facilitating UN General Assembly meetings and behind-the-scenes coordination necessary for ensuring successful events.

According to Dr. Shpiniov, DGACM has a dual responsibility in the UN system, offering assistance to both the GA and ECOSOC. First and foremost, the department oversees GA meetings by sending a secretariat to each committee. The secretariats provide institutional memory on written protocols and procedures, guiding discussions among member states and leading conversations to a fruitful conclusion. Moreover, the department also tailors meetings based on general guidelines such as gender equality, respect for diversity, integrity, and professionalism. For instance, each speaker is free to use their language or bring his or her interpreter, which promotes cultural diversity and allows for equal representation.

The second role of the department is to help member states reach mutual compromises. Most often, participants of a meeting come with their respective agenda; accordingly,

achieving consensus for a motion becomes extremely difficult. The secretariats are charged with ensuring the highest level of clarity of interpretation to “Harmonize the actions of nations.” Also, when the negotiation process stagnates, the department must facilitate discussion and offer help from the procedural perspective to suggest best practices from past experiences. The ability to exercise “informal authority,” said Dr. Shpiniov, is how the department can aid the member states in doing their job. A prominent example involved the utility of publishing materials in all six official languages and the accessibility of social media platforms in certain countries. In the end, the secretariat helped the member states resolve the issue through inclusion of descriptive words on the final recommendation.

Dr. Shpiniov disclosed that the department has an impressive 650 employees in the New York headquarters and even more around the world. They strive to publish multilingual interpretation and translation of meeting documents into six official languages simultaneously. Furthermore, the department is responsible for basic editing, documentation and record-keeping, as their results are published on the UN daily journal, circulated online for public access.

The evolution of the work of the office follows the track of technology innovation. In the early days of Dr. Shpiniov’s career in the UN, all documents were paper-based. Machine or computer translation were used only as assistive tools while manual editing remained the most prominent. When the fourth wave of industrialization arrived, the UN began digitizing all of its work and documents. During 2003 to 2004, written records were gradually transformed into digital records, paving the way for the online circulation of materials.

Dr. Shpiniov described development of the e-delegate system, enabling conference attendees to locate the digital copies of relevant documents, check the agenda of sessions, and upload statements. Such innovation testifies to how technology could transform the face of conferences to achieve greater efficiency. The recent growth of Artificial Intelligence capabilities, however, will not easily replace UN workforce, as Dr. Shpiniov stated confidently that the complexity of diplomacy and contents of political exchanges still require humans to be the mainstay.

Finally, Dr. Shpiniov provided insights on the preparation of the UN@75. Marked as an important anniversary, the 75th session of UNGA would feature not only rounds of regular high-political debates but also a special climate summit. Heads of State, political figures, leaders of industries, civil society, and academia are all cordially invited to partake in the climate action session, during which each participant brings not a political statement but a practical action plan. Dr. Shpiniov and his office would sure guarantee success for the coming highlight of the year.

H.E. MR. VOLODYMYR YELCHENKO

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UKRAINE TO THE UNITED NATIONS



Pictured: (front row) Izabela Zawartka, Ikonii Chiabi, Dr. Christine K. Durbak, Peggy Lau, Jenifer Miller, Winky Lee, (back row) Yung-Hsuan Wu, Bryan Liu, H.E. Mr. Volodymyr Yelchenko, Edward Landzberg, Jeremey Tong

H.E. Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko welcomed the interns at the Permanent Mission of Ukraine and spoke briefly about his career and work at the United Nations, which included the Security Council, then invited interns to ask questions and engage in an informative dialogue with H.E..

At the outset, H.E. discussed the subject of WIT's 28th International Conference last April which has been co-sponsored by the Government of Ukraine since 1992. The topic of "Chornobyl at 33" reaffirmed that nuclear safety remains a relevant and important issue in the modern day. Though its use hazards a great deal of risk, he expounded, we should call on the experience acquired as a result of past disasters and growing knowledge produced by academia to secure and fortify associated safety measures. In an effort to increase public knowledge and raise awareness, the government of Ukraine is currently rebuilding the Chernobyl plant with the inclusion of informative tourist attractions. Moreover, the release of the recent HBO series has reintroduced the topic into modern discourse, additionally publicizing paradoxically positive outcomes on nature, such as improved animal health and bird species returning to their habitats in the region. The Ambassador highlighted how this transparency and full disclosure to

the global community are critical and constructive steps for the improvement of future safety prospects.

In response to a question regarding the potential development of nuclear energy, such as in China and Japan, Mr. Yelchenko gave his full support to new constructions. He applauded the shift away from atmospherically-harmful reliance on natural gas and coal in favor of alternative solutions such as nuclear power, however, warned of the difficulty which rapid transformation may bring to the working sector. The re-education and re-training programs associated with industry change are a challenging but necessary component of environmental reform.

Transitioning towards a geopolitical discussion, the latter half of the session was centered on the question of Russian encroachment on the territorial possessions and sovereignty of Ukraine. With great frustration, the Ambassador emphasized the difficulty and complexity of the prolonged conflict. While he highlighted the new Ukrainian administration's intent to mollify rivalry, the Russian government's lack of willingness to negotiate on issues such as the fair exchange of prisoners continues to exacerbate tensions.

Touching on his experience with the seeking of a political solution through the United Nations, Mr. Yelchenko provided meaningful insight into the operations of the Security Council. Beginning with the invasion of Crimea in 2014, meetings regarding the issue have been overwhelmingly fruitless on account of Russia's Permanent Member veto privilege. The Ambassador lamented the decisive nature of this power and apparent apathy of many UN members to work around it to seek as resolution. Further, Mr. Yelchenko illustrated how the efficacy of the Security Council's recently passed resolution on "Persons Reported Missing in Armed Conflict" will be undermined by Russia's request to remove several items from the originally proposed document. The increasingly important role of international media and application of sanctions to prevent this reproachable activity were emphasized.

In conclusion, the session with the Ukrainian Ambassador was fascinating and enlightening for the Summer Interns. We thank Mr. Yelchenko for his time.

MS. IRENA ZUBCEVIC

CHIEF OF THE OFFICE OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT AND COORDINATION
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, UN DESA



Pictured: (front row) June Hong, Ikonii Chiabi, Irena Zubcevic, Eunyong Jang, Izabela Zawartka, Fred Yonghabi, (middle row) Peggy Lau, Jenifer Miller, Winky Lee, (back row) Yung-Hsuan Wu, Hyunbin Shin, Edward Landzberg, Jeremy Tong

Ms. Irena Zubcevic spoke to the interns regarding her career as an employee of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), a body which is part of the United Nations Secretariat, thus providing operational support to the UN and its Member States. Consisting of 10 divisions, UN DESA has duties ranging from the organization of major UN conferences to analyzing the latest socioeconomic trends. Therefore, the organization exerts its global influence by uniting the international community to tackle the world's most pressing problems. Serving as the head of the Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development, Ms. Zubcevic supports the work of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), with a particular focus on assisting and coordinating countries to achieve the Agenda 2030.

Ms. Zubcevic elaborated on the structure and functions of the UN's principal organs, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. International civil servants who work for the UN Secretariat, she explained, spend most of their career

serving in the organization, thus, upholding the continuity on which Member nations often rely when making important decisions.

As described by Ms. Zubcevic, the UN resembles a world parliament set up to harmonize the actions of nations. As such, it enshrines the concept of equality between countries. This could be seen in the setting of the General Assembly where each country reserves only one vote, regardless of the size of its territory, population or economy. Apart from the General Assembly, she stated, the Security Council is another reflection of an international commitment to maintain global peace and stability. With just 10 non-permanent seats representing a total of 188 Member States, excluding the 5 permanent members, Ms. Zubcevic regarded the election of non-permanent members of the council as the most difficult and expensive election. Some countries are therefore seeking to transform the Council into a more inclusive decision-making body.

The importance of the implementation of Agenda 2030 was also brought to the forefront of Ms. Zubcevic's presentation. The idea of sustainable development emerged in the 1960s, long before the announcement of the SDGs in 2016, when awareness of destruction that human activities impose on nature developed. Proceeding the Millennium Development Goals, the SDGs incorporated 17 areas in respect to the social, environmental and economic pillars of sustainable development, notably expanding its scope to include both developing and developed countries.

Ms. Zubcevic explained to interns how she sees SDGs as an opportunity for intergenerational solidarity, reiterating that what people are doing today can have substantial impacts on future generations. To this end, she encouraged young people to be less selfish and to think of the living standard of future generations.

Regarding global inclusivity, Ms. Zubcevic referred to the major challenges that inhibit individuals from attaining a better standard of life. Citing climate change and the subsequent extreme weather as an example, Ms. Zubcevic noted that humanity's future challenges are most likely trans-boundary and, thus, that it is impossible for a single country to overcome the challenge on its own. In this sense, SDGs serve as a framework to gather loosely communicated and coordinated leaders to solve critical global problems.

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Zubcevic emphasized that only through strong political will and effective institutions will the world achieve Agenda 2030. She also recognized the importance of a stable political environment, as well as the fair re-distribution and equal opportunity to develop one's potential as the prerequisites of the successful achievement of SDGs.