



National Model United Nations

Final Report of the 2016 National Model United Nations Course
at the University of St. Gallen



April 2016

NMUN - purpose and objectives

The elective course “National Model United Nations” offered at the University of St. Gallen (HSG) gives students with interest in international politics the opportunity to deepen their understanding in that respect and to gain an insight into the functioning of the international system by way of the United Nations. For this purpose students experience continuous preparation at the University during the fall semester before they can eventually perform at the main event in March, the National Model United Nations Conference in New York City.



This year a team of 20 selected students was prepared by Prof. Dr. Thomas Burri and his teaching assistant, Meike Pauletzki, for this unique opportunity.

Biweekly preparation

Throughout the fall semester 2015 the NMUN team met every other Monday afternoon for four hour long seminar sessions, intended at deepening the knowledge about the United Nations and its functioning as well as to train crucial skills in international politics, such as negotiation skills and public speaking skills.

After having studied the UN Charter and other crucial guiding UN documents, the team was to study the NMUN Rules of Procedure, the set of procedural rules which are intended to make the NMUN Conference the most accurate simulation of a UN Conference. Within this framework, the team also had the opportunity to train resolution drafting and negotiating. A four hour long mock simulation in November at the University was then meant to be the general rehearsal in terms of procedural training.

In order to get trained in presenting a clear cut and leading opinion in the most succinct and substantively rich way, each student was asked to write an article on a current political or economic issue in the manner of the leader articles in “The Economist”. Furthermore, the students were given the opportunity to train their public speaking skills by means of prepared presentations as well as spontaneous speeches, which were video recorded and subsequently analysed in a plenary sitting.

Afghanistan – our designated country

Besides getting trained in procedural matters, substantive preparation with regard to the country, the team got allocated to represent at the conference in New York, was a crucial part as well. For this purpose the team gathered the most relevant information necessary for a most reputable and truthful representation of Afghanistan and its national interests in New York. After this, the team was expected to apply all the skills acquired during the preparation and write so-called position papers describing Afghanistan's stand and political propositions with regard to currently vital international issues, as the last step before heading off for New York.

The moment we had all been waiting for: The Conference

On March 24 the National Model United Nations was declared open and we could finally put our hard work and dedication from the previous seven months to good use. Our delegation, comprised of 20 students, was split into teams of two in order to represent Afghanistan in its 10 committees. During the course of the conference we held speeches and met a lot of fellow students, from all over the world, with whom we formed strategic alliances, drafted resolutions and did a fair amount of negotiating and compromising.

Visit of the Swiss Mission to the UN

On our afternoon off we visited the Swiss UN Mission located within walking distance from the conference hotel in downtown. We had the honor to meet the recently appointed new Swiss Permanent Representative to the United Nations Jürg Lauber. He explained the work of the mission as well as the difficulties a rather small country, such as Switzerland, is facing in the UN. At the end we were also allowed to ask questions about recent international and national politics and also on how to pursue a career in diplomacy.



The UN Headquarters

On the final day of the conference the simulated General Assembly as well as the closing ceremony were held in the United Nations General Assembly hall of the UN Headquarters. It was hard not to feel a little bit in awe upon entering this very prominent hall. After the General Assembly voted on some of the resolutions drafted during the week, it was time for the closing ceremony. During the ceremony the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations Jan Eliasson held an inspirational speech. Subsequently it was sadly already time to say farewell. Many students however stayed in New York for a little longer after the conference and most of them even returned to the UN Headquarters the next day for an insightful guided tour.



Acknowledgments

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