

GIMUN ANNUAL CONFERENCE JOURNAL

"ADDRESSING
CONFLICTS AND
CRISES: NEW
PERSPECTIVES
OF REGIONAL
AND
INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS"







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Global Solutions to Global Problems—ILO welcomes GIMUN 2023 Annual Conference

Chrystelle Dejean Servières

It will come as no surprise that by partnering with the International Labour Organization, GIMUN 2023 edition of the Annual Conference would be placed under the sign of public good and multilateralism—a fact confirmed by the statements made by the guest speakers in attendance.

Among them, and first to speak, was ILO Director of Multilateral Cooperation Christophe Perrin. «As our world faces new and complex challenges, multilateralism is essential, so you are very welcome here», he said referring to the GIMUN staff, Executive Board, chairs and delegates. This attachment to fostering cooperation in the minds of the next generation was to be repeated throughout the warm welcome he gave to veterans and fresh faces alike. «What is becoming increasingly obvious is that we need global solutions for global problems. And in order to [find them], we need a new, more interconnected system. We also need to rally around core values», he added. «One of those [values], and among those which ILO is particularly active in upholding, is social justice».

Historically speaking, social justice is actually one of the founding values of ILO—as Mr Remo Becci, Head of ILO archive and historical documentation and the second guest speaker to take the mic, explained. «As a matter of fact», Becci added, «ILO is the oldest UN specialized agency, and came about in 1919, in part as an answer to promises that were made to workers in return for holding off on strikes until the end of World War I and of the war effort». The second reason for creating ILO, Becci explained, was the Russian revolution after which European governments were wary of letting too many inequalities go on for too long. The third and last main reason, according to Becci, was the necessity for society to integrate returning soldiers back into the workforce.



Going back to Mr Perrin's welcoming speech on behalf of ILO, the topic moved on to the question of knowing what role the next generation will play in upholding these values. «Actually», Perrin said, «ILO has proposed to launch a new Global Coalition for Social Justice, which will place a particular attention on youth». This project comes as an answer to UN Director-General António Guterres' recent call for policies that support equity and social justice—and promises to be a huge project in the future. «What will the next generation bring? This is what we are excited about—and not just at ILO, but as a society» Perrin concluded.



The first guest speaker invited from GIMUN Secretaries-General to the opening ceremony was Mrs Andrea Aeby. To a nonprofit like GIMUN, the expertise of a human rights, peace and global governance expert like her was always bound to be priceless. «It is becoming more and more obvious that there is no action that can work alone», when referring to the importance of multilateral cooperation when faced with internal and international crises. «Last year, the title [of Peace Week] was ‘Peace is possible.’ But maybe that was a bit ambitious. When faced with the reality of conflict around global issues, peacebuilding efforts have to be attempted, but they rarely succeed.» Later, Mrs Aeby would make a new proposition. «What if, for the tenth anniversary of Peace Week, we chose something like ‘Trust is the foundation of peace’?».



One of the points the current Counselor for Peace and Security at the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN Office in Geneva made was that, even when they succeed, «peacebuilding efforts go largely unnoticed» because news on achievements in this field would often equate news “about something that is not happening”. Later, when taking extra questions for the GIMUN journal, Mrs Aeby elaborated on the issue. «Some high-quality media outlets do report on these achievements. But they are seldom aimed at the general public». When asked about ways to improve the role the media might play in conflict resolution, Mrs Aeby answers that these outlets could influence the way we think about it—by changing the way we talk about it. «If it became more common to say ‘Peace studies’ instead of ‘Conflict studies’—even in academic fields—maybe we could make peacebuilding achievements more likely to be a scoop», she concluded.

Talking about his vision for the future, the last guest speaker Dr Raditya M. Kusumaningprang, Counselor at the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the UN, the World



Trade Organization and other institutions in Geneva, introduced his point by using an analogy. «Let’s say you are at a party where two to three people dominate the dancefloor. [...] Mind you, they take up a lot of space, all dance to their own tune, and each of them tries to coerce you into imitating them. Do you join in, or do you stay on the sidelines, or even at the bar? If you join one of them, you constantly risk offending the others.

So what do you do? This is exactly the dilemma ASEAN countries faced, and continue to face», Dr Kusumaningprang explained. «Their choices are mostly to just try not to offend anyone, to navigate the dancefloor as best they can, and to band together so that they can do more as a unified party».

When prompted by the audience to elaborate on the specific role of regional international organizations, Dr Kusumaningprang asks: «Who would know your neighbor best, out of everyone else in the neighborhood? You would. [...] Each organization has its own role to play, but what regional international organizations can do best is preserve the possibility for a dialogue to happen».



What transpired most during the GIMUN opening ceremony was that everyone could agree the next generation had a huge role to play in steering international relations towards a more multilateral future. As our guest speakers stated, building trust is key, and, perhaps, it is how GIMUN can do the most public good : by fostering trust within the youth.





Migration flows caused by organised crime in the Americas and the first Spanish-speaking committee of GIMUN

Patricia Fernández

One of the major problems faced by most American states today is organised crime, which is mainly responsible for drug trafficking flows and citizen insecurity. Latin America is estimated to be one of the most dangerous regions in the world, in fact, according to statistics from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 33% of homicides in the world occur in this region. Organised crime is often structured "in small, disorganised, fragmented and unstable groups", although it is true that they have managed to seize control of territory in many areas of the continent through the use of arms, violence and repression. This is possible partly because of the weakness or absence of the state in the most vulnerable areas with the highest rates of poverty and marginalisation.

The proliferation of these criminal gangs has a direct impact on life in the region where they carry out their activities. Firstly, in many cases they hinder access to transport routes and access to basic goods and services for the population. In addition, they use street repression tactics, which contributes to worsening safety and security in neighbourhoods, streets and cities. Secondly, they encourage the flow of people who are forced to leave their place of origin not only in search of greater security, but also of economic prosperity that is cut short by the presence of these criminal groups. However, many migrants fall into the hands of armed groups even after their displacement efforts and end up being recruited and exploited by these mafias.



With regard to the choice of topic, this year GIMUN set itself the challenge of becoming trilingual. Therefore, despite being a bilingual organisation (English and French), this year the representation of Spanish was taken into account in an effort to respect the multilingualism that characterises the United Nations. Thus, the Organisation of American States (OAS) was able to have an individual committee whose debate was conducted entirely in Spanish. Furthermore, the GIMUN committed to include this language in its official external communication, and the delegates were provided with working material such as study guides also in Spanish.

The OAS is the longest-standing international regional organisation in the world. Its origins date back to the first International Conference of American States held in 1889. Its constitutional charter became effective in 1951 and has now been ratified by the 35 Independent States of the Americas. In addition, the European Union enjoys Permanent Observer status in the forum. The organisation's mission is "to achieve an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence ", as stated in article 1 of its constitutional charter.



Delegates from several countries in the Americas defended the interests of their countries in two rounds of debate, the first dealing with organised crime and its impact on migration flows in the continent, and the second addressing the political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. On both occasions the negotiations proved fruitful, as through diplomacy and consensus, the delegations managed to adopt a satisfactory resolution for all parties.

Fortunately, this year we were able to count on the presence of students from several Latin American countries and from Spain, which provided a much more international dimension to the distribution of the committees.



Not only because of linguistic matters, but also because of the topics addressed, as they encompassed issues related to one of the world's most dynamic regions, Latin America. It remains to be seen whether Spanish will retain its position in future annual conferences, but in any case, its presence this year can certainly be considered a resounding success.



ASEAN, the gateway to the Asian way: South China Sea Dispute

Minwoo Ki

Today, at The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, history will be made as member states of the ASEAN community, its partners and its neighbouring nations will reconcile to discuss and attempt to reach a solution on the issues and disputes surrounding the South China Sea. The topic of the South China Sea has increasingly become the main focal point of geopolitical issues in the region and tensions have been rising as the challenge poses huge implications for stakeholders.

Better known in its shortened form, ASEAN is a community of Southeast Asian countries formed in 1967, and its purpose is to promote intergovernmental cooperation in the region in various fields such as security, economy, and politics. It comprises ten Southeast Asian developing countries of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Together, they aim to achieve cooperation and prosperity in this area which is culturally intense and historically rich. With a total population of 668 million people, the region is becoming ever important not only for the prosperity of the region, but also for its impact at the global level outside of the area.

The ASEAN Regional Forum is a regionwide Asia–Pacific multilateral forum for official consultations on peace and security issues concerning ASEAN member states and its «dialogue partners». The ASEAN Regional Forum is characterised by its minimal institutionalisation (in comparison to other regional organisations), decision making by consensus, and the First track and Second track diplomacy which sets in stone both formal and informal diplomacy.

The main issue of the South China Sea dispute is definitely the challenge concerning the “rightful” ownership of the territorial waters of the South China Sea. Although the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) can be considered the main tool meant to regulate territorial waters disputes, it sees its limits as there are a variety of different claims by several states for their own definition of the territorial boundaries of these waters.

So what makes the South China Sea so crucial?

Firstly, it is the amount of capital which flows through the sea. The South China Sea is home to many shipping lanes traversing back and forth from China and several of the export–oriented countries to Europe and African states. The strategic control over the seas in this aspect implies a control over the shipping lanes which thereby bestows an enormous amount of power in a geopolitical context. Secondly, the abundance of natural resources in the sea is also a factor which puts these countries in a stalemate. These natural resources range from crude oil to fisheries which the countries will gain the right to exploit from gaining the right to the territorial waters.





Still, it remains the case that one of the most important stakeholders of the issue is the non-member of the ASEAN community in People's Republic of China. They claim that deriving from the times of the Republic of China (its predecessor), the nine-dash line which unfortunately covers most of the South China Sea and overlaps with the exclusive economic zone claims of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. The member states of the ASEAN community possess their multitude of claims involving Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Vietnam.

Meanwhile in GIMUN's ASEAN committee, after seeing success in the first round of negotiations concerning the proliferation of nuclear arsenal in Asia, the ARF moved to the second topic of debate, the South China Sea dispute. Taking part in international negotiations implies recognizing that some situations are entangled in a complex web of overlapping claims. This second topic proved much more challenging to make progress as a vast division appeared between the PRC and the US, the two hegemons of the 21st century and their respective spheres of influence. A variety of proposals came and went but no tangible foundations came into fruition. However, the debate would shift into the next gear with the arrival of US Vice-President Kamala Harris.

The status quo of the discussion flipped frequently, a two-block confrontation filled with historical grievances aimed towards PRC or the US. Unable to steer the committee in a precise direction due to fundamental disagreements and constrained by the time left for the negotiations, the delegates vehemently defended their positions and navigated through the muddy waters without a break. However, in the last instances of the committee, the ARF, to the surprise of the chairs, managed to agree on a draft proposal showing the qualitative improvements of its participants.

Remaining seized of the matters discussed and eagerly awaiting the next round of discussions, the members of the ARF will continue to play a pivotal role in one of the most dynamic regions of the world, whose success or failures will shape the direction of the international order and global stability.



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The attribution of a possible sixth permanent seat at the Security Council: is the application of India possible?

Elisa Allegra Ferrante

Today, February 14, the Committee representing the UN Security Council has been commissioned to attribute a possible sixth permanent seat. The UN Security Council was established in 1946 and is the organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. In 1963, according to Article 23 of the United Nations Charter, it was decided to increase the number of Member States to fifteen, adding five permanent members with veto powers (United States, France, China, Russia, and United Kingdom) and ten non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly with two-thirds of the majority. The non-permanent members are elected for two years and are not re-eligible for a second term. In the past, many different countries such as Germany and Japan already proposed to increase the powers of emerging countries within the international community by adding one more permanent member.



The eventuality of having a sixth permanent seat at the UN Security Council has always been problematic for the great powers like Russia, which have always wanted to protect their authority, their position, and their reputation. For this reason, it is unthinkable for some superpowers to have ten permanent members. Nevertheless, countries such as Russia have always considered India as one of the perfect candidates for this seat because of Russian interest in controlling the country.

When did India become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council?

Superpowers such as the United States and the Soviet Union suggested that India should join the UN Security Council in 1950, but India refused because of the Cold War policy. Today, India has not only been elected for seven terms as a two-year non-permanent member, but it also has twice the number of peacekeepers deployed. It is now considered as the second-most populous country and the largest democracy, as well as the fifth largest and fast-growing economy of the world.



The intended benefit that India would acquire if it joins the Security Council as a new permanent member is certainly the much-needed leverage to expand its geo-political and geo-economic influence globally. Furthermore, India would be a stabilizer and moderator for China, an emerging hegemony in Asia.

The Security Council has existed for more than 50 years now and one of the reasons why its Member States should make some changes is because it does not represent today's geopolitical and economic reality. For this reason, the United Nations, the international community and the Security Council would need a renewal in order to demonstrate how countries are able to deal with the issues and realities of our century.



During the current debate session, countries such as Brazil, Ghana, Japan, India and Gabon suggested that there should be five new permanent members, in order to represent every single region of the world. However, not all the countries agreed, especially because of the disadvantages that five new permanent members could bring.

Indeed, the question that most of the countries ask themselves is: does the attribution of a possible sixth permanent seat have to do with economic representation or is it a demonstration of power from the emerging countries? Another one of their concerns is the role of the new permanent members within the decision process, especially the possible implications linked to the power dynamics of the UN Security Council.

During the difficult debate session concerning this crucial and important change, powerful countries have put forward their opinions by debating and suggesting different solutions. The one that will probably be adopted is a new permanent member which will change monthly and give the possibility to developing countries to be more represented. Considering that it has already been done in 1963, it would therefore be thinkable for superpowers to allow countries like Japan and India to apply and give them the chance to become permanent members at the Security Council.





For the improvement of the working conditions of immigrants in the Persian Gulf

Matteo Galasso

Almost 300 million people in the world live in a country different from the one they were born in. According to ILO, 90% of them migrate in hope of better working conditions. This is a migrating phenomenon that has been increasing for the past thirty years, which consists in permanent migration waves. The main migration routes are the Mediterranean route, which was opened after Kadhafi's regime in Libya, and the Balkans route, which allows migrants to enter Europe via Turkey.

The access to the latter has been greatly restricted by a series of conventions between states and the construction of two walls: one at the border between Greece and Turkey and the other located on the Turkish–Iranian border. As a consequence, a large number of migrants looking for better working conditions were forced to give up on Europe and turn to the Persian Gulf instead, including oil giants such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which are part of the Gulf Cooperation Council. There, wealth and the relatively small density of the local population makes it so that countries actively look for foreigners to work in dangerous and underpaid jobs, for instance in the construction sector.

Workers coming from South and Central Asia through India and Bangladesh migrate without really knowing the conditions and modalities of the jobs they were hired for in their host countries, with their only certainty being that they will receive a better salary for their families and themselves.



Because of the insecurity and precariousness that the migrant workers have to face right from the start, their working and living experience only worsens with time: their rights to receive a decent salary and work with dignity are not always respected. Moreover, these categories of workers often struggle to gather information and move about autonomously because of the language barrier: this makes them vulnerable and a designated target for traffickers and employers who provide nondemocratic working conditions.

The current welcoming system for migrant workers, known as the Kafala System, was adopted in the 1950's by the CCG, Jordan and Lebanon. It consists in a work contract that includes the basic services that are to be provided and guaranteed for the workers and their family, like housing and food.

In theory, this can seem functional, but the reality shows that migrant workers end up not being able to go home and lose all control over their own life. Through this system, they lose most of their human rights, such as the freedom of movement, and become what's known as «modern slaves». In spite of the integration mechanism that it provides, it is undeniable that the Kafala System is flawed and could be improved. Among Middle East countries, the tendency is for abolishing this system and implementing a new, more restrictive one that disregards even more the working conditions of immigrants.



Although the UN and the EU strongly condemn this system, the possibility of reforming it from the outside seems rather unrealistic, as it proves to be an almost impossible task for an international organization to force the Gulf monarchies to change a model that works for them, and which is part of their work culture.

One of ILO's missions is to bring forward resolutions that would make this system more «human», while taking into account not only the agencies responsible for the coordination of foreign workers but also the governments of the countries of departure.

This is a model that was already adopted for the European migrations to the USA in 1800 and during the after-war, like in Italy for instance, where emigration was administered directly by the state that had the power to establish treaties with the host countries. This is why the current system in place in CCG countries should create a round table to include the countries of departure, such as India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Egypt.



Currently, there are propositions that could improve the living and working conditions for foreigners working in the Gulf. For instance, establish a minimum salary and prepare an information campaign on the working conditions in the host countries; preserve the workers' status by giving the responsibility of their visas to the governments and not the companies, so that they can change jobs without worrying about getting permission from their employers. Migrants need

to be more independent and should be given language courses and a way to communicate directly with the ILO, in order for them to be able to report any form of abuse and benefit from legal expertise.

Finally, the host countries should be obligated to provide transparent reports in order to have a better oversight of the real living conditions of migrant workers. Without their collaboration, guaranteeing humane working and living conditions will only be more difficult overtime.

The propositions were elaborated by the ILO committee during the GIMUN Annual Conference (13/02–17/02 2023).

Stealing Thunder At GIMUN International Criminal Court

Chyrstelle Dejean Servières

After last year's successful first-ever mock trial on the Chiquita Brands International terrorist funding case, GIMUN brings back the International Criminal Court Committee for its 2023 edition. For the time of the Conference, the floor of the International Labour Organization turned into the grounds of a mock trial whose task was to determine the guilt or innocence of Omar Al-Bachir. In real life, the Sudanese ex-President is facing charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Thus, part of the fun will be to read the real ICC's future verdict on the defendant—when and if he indeed goes to trial. But what sets this committee, apart from their more traditional model United Nations, is that the sessions follow court proceedings. No circular argument can be made without the attorneys objecting to it, no one knows in advance what the witnesses will reveal, and, of course, anyone, even the judges, can be called back to order, which make this committee a particularly exhilarating learning experience that pushes even veterans MUNers to take these new rules in stride and perform beyond their limits.



For the defense in this mock trial the most difficult count to defeat would have been the war crimes charge. This is because, somewhat surprisingly, declaring a defendant guilty of this crime does not necessarily require the prosecution to actually demonstrate any intent to commit the crime. Pursuant to the Rome Statute—the international treaty which created the IPC—some actions such as sacking a village are enough to qualify a war crime. «In order to defeat that count, we would have had to shed real doubt on the fact that our client was indeed the one who ordered these actions, or that he did everything he could to stop them before or immediately after the first occurrences. Of course, we will do it, but our whole strategy is to show that these actions can only be defined as war crimes, and not as crimes against humanity or a genocide». Of course for the prosecution, the goal is to make sure that not even one count is dropped by the judges. This is where the defense has to go beyond simply shedding doubts on their client's guilt—even if any reasonable doubt would indeed benefit them. This is where they need to implement courtroom strategies—the most important of which, in these mock trial proceedings, was stealing thunder.



Stealing thunder is a courtroom strategy that is most often by the defense. The lawyer reveals negative information about his or her client before the prosecution can do so. Of course, by definition, there is no point in revealing a negative information which the opposing team does not have or cannot use. The real interest in this strategy is that, if that negative information is revealed by opposing testimony, then it will be more damaging than if the defense volunteers it.

This also gives the defendant's legal team the opportunity to present the information in a way which downplays its significance. However, lawyers also warn against using this strategy too early into court proceedings—lest the defendant ruin the first impression he leaves on the judges.

In this instance, the defendant chose to plead guilty to the count of war crimes and admitted some facts before the court moved on to the count of crimes against humanity. By doing so, his counsel could center their defense around a central argument : their client was guilty of war crimes, but not of genocide or crimes against humanity.

By far the most disputed count was genocide. «The whole point of our defense is that our client never intended to kill civilians. Were the means he used to hunt down illegally armed rebels inadequate, did he allow for needless violence to happen, that is to be determined. But he never planned to destroy one people, their culture or their ability to keep on living. Even the pattern of the military operations he ordered does not follow a sweep or methodical scorched earth pattern, but consists in several separate hits in response to real intelligence about rebel caches». While the court found Omar Al-Bachir guilty on all counts in the end, whether the real IPC will agree is sure to be very interesting.



Of course, the defense was far from having the monopoly on courtroom strategies. Objecting, for example, is also a prosecutor's game, and the attorneys of the committees proved that. Credit where credit is due : the best at this game was voted to be among the defense. But the prosecution was never far behind, and late-trial, the defense would have to learn to take their interventions in stride. Guilty or innocent, what this year's edition proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, is that the International Criminal Court, as a committee, is here to stay.



Internal migration: protecting the most vulnerable and underserved

Elisa Allegra Ferrante

Since 1950, the UNHCR has been an institution based on the protection and the rights of refugees. Refugees are not only people who migrate from one country to another, but they can also move within the country where they are from. Those who move within their own country do not cross a border, but have decided to flee due to persecution, conflict, violence, and disasters in order to be able to settle in a more controlled and protected area.

How does this differ from other refugees?

People leaving their country due to war normally try to search for protection provided by another country's government, however, this protection is not always guaranteed for refugees who migrate internally.



According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), in the first months of 2022 there were more than 9.6 million new forced internal displacements, and many of the refugees lost their jobs, belongings and relatives. In 2021, the vast majority of internal displacement was recorded in Syria, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Yemen.

During the GIMUN Annual Conference 2023, the Committee representing the UNHCR debated on the topic of internal migrants. Delegates' opinions differed greatly and were very controversial. At the end of the different debate sessions, with the help of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the rest of the countries were able to sign a resolution.

What proposal has been put forward by the countries that signed the resolution to improve the conditions of internally displaced refugees?

The Central African Republic, the Republic of Yemen, the Republic of South Sudan, the



Russian Federation, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Türkiye, Poland, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the People's Republic of China, and the «aid» countries, namely the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran, decided to establish new funding mechanisms to improve conditions in developing countries, which are particularly affected by the consequences of internal displacement. In addition, the signatory countries decided to mobilise additional financial

resources for the existing UNHCR Global Fund. The foreseen funding for developing countries will range from ten to fifteen billion dollars in addition to the amount chosen by the UNHCR Executive Committee and the High Commissioner Filippo Grandi.



Moreover, we can clearly see how digitalisation is becoming more and more important nowadays.

Yet even today there are still people who have difficulty obtaining or replacing documentation concerning their personal databases. In this case, the solution for the signatory countries could be to switch to a more digitised system that will solve this issue more efficiently, also allowing governments to adopt emergency protection and encryption measures.

Syria reminded all signatory countries of the importance of cooperation and safeguarding the human rights of internally displaced refugees.

In this period of global uncertainty, it is vital to support weaker and developing countries to achieve a real change that will ensure better conditions for all refugees in all countries of the world.



Summary of the developments in the ASEAN Regional Forum

Matthieu Dupraz

On the morning of February 14th, 2023, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) convened in Geneva. For the first time, the meetings were held in Switzerland, so outside of the Asian sphere. This serves as a good indication of how East Asian issues have grown to prominence on the global stage, captivating the attention of one of the significant diplomatic centres of the planet.

The tasks faced by the committee were daunting, but its members did not flinch under pressure. The agenda was soon set to tackle the weapons of mass destruction in the East Asian Region. The direction of the negotiation went in multiple ways, but the North Korean nuclear program took most of the delegates' interest. This diplomatic ambition was seized by the North Korean delegation, who cleverly leveraged the negotiations to potentially have UN sanctions lifted and gain a closer commercial relationship with the region. The North Korean talks were conducted by a group of delegates who made significant progress during unmoderated sessions in the course of the first and second days of the negotiations. Other issues were also touched upon. Indonesia pushed for developments in the fight against the usage by terrorist groups of chemical and biological weapons, rallying a small coalition to work and write on the topic. If anyone still doubted the displacement exerted by China in multilateral settings, they should have seen the clout that surrounded the People's Republic's delegation.

China appeared untouchable, seeing only a few mentions of its growing nuclear arsenal. In a strategic move, China also supported the negotiations with North Korea. The discussions showed the firm commitment of delegates to eradicating weapons of mass destruction based on international law and moral obligations.

As in any good story, a moment must happen where the characters appear on the verge of failure and their accomplishments under risk of failing. In the ARF, that moment came in the finalisation and recognition of their draft proposal into a resolution. The process got tense and dreadful, with suspense and exhaustion growing among the assembly. However, all of the above were relieved when the chairs accepted the resolution, and the document successfully voted in cheers, with only one country opposing the text.

Rejuvenated by this first success, the ARF moved to the second topic of debate, the South China Sea dispute. Taking part in international negotiations implies realising that some situations are entangled in a complex web of overlapping claims. This second topic proved much more challenging to make progress on. A broad divide quickly appeared between the two hegemonies of the 21st century and their respective sphere of influence, the People's Republic of China and the United States of America. Proposals came and went in different directions but without tangible foundations to build upon.





The debate became tenser with the arrival of US Vice-President Kamala Harris as the representative of her country. The discussion often turned, again and again, into a two-block confrontation filled with historical grievances aimed towards China or the US. Unable to steer the committee in a precise direction due to fundamental disagreements and constrained by the time left for the negotiations, the delegates vehemently defended their positions and navigated through those muddy waters without a breakout of the

session. However, in the last instances of the committee, the ARF, at the surprise of the chairs, managed to agree on a draft proposal, showing the qualitative improvements of its participants.

Remaining seized of the matters discussed and eagerly awaiting the next round of discussions, the members of the ARF will continue to play a pivotal role in one of the most dynamic regions of the world, whose success or failures will shape the direction of the international order and global stability.

Venezuela's economic crisis is no coincidence

Mario Mazo Gálvez

The recent events in Venezuela are not the result of mere chance; its political turmoil, economic crisis and social problems are the result of a series of major events that have taken place throughout history.

How did Venezuela get to this point?

To provide some context, Venezuela's oil reserves were discovered in the 1960s, and with this came great economic growth and modernisation. However, the true challenge arose when, due to centralisation and little political diversification, the country began to decay as a result of the declining oil prices in the 1980s and 1990s.



The social upheaval, with extreme levels of unemployment and social inequality, led to the emergence of Hugo Chávez, a leader who, with his charisma and proposals for the country's renovation, was elected President of Venezuela in 1998. Although he fulfilled his promises and managed to reduce the level of poverty, the so-called “champion of the poor” did not invest in the diversification of the country's economy or the renewal of the oil industry.

Finally, as predicted by economists, in 2008 the country fell back into crisis in the wake of another fall in oil prices. Following accusations of undermining democracy and the establishment of a new national constitution in 1999 (which implemented an expansion of presidential powers), Chávez was re-elected for up to three more terms. After his death in 2013, Nicolás Maduro became his interim successor and was democratically elected the following year, on the premise of fixing the country's problems. Once again, the crisis worsened in 2014 and since then shortages have persisted to this day.

Numerous attempts have been undertaken to reduce the debt and address the deficit, but all that has been achieved is a negative effect with the onset of hyperinflation and the devaluation of the bolivar.

This inflation was estimated by the IMF in 2018 to be one of the highest recorded in modern times, reaching 3 000 000 %. After several failed efforts at changing the government, in 2018, opposition leader Juan Guaidó declared himself interim president of

Venezuela, claiming that the 2018 elections were fraudulent. Guaidó received widespread local support and his government was recognised by 50 countries, although Maduro remains in command of the army and the main institutions.





Venezuela's current situation

Today, the country remains stuck in crisis, although its downward slide has slowed. In 2019, Maduro approved a number of liberalising measures, such as allowing citizens to open businesses and make purchases using US dollars.

While these policies have led to some improvement, it is worth stressing that the country continues to be in a continuing poor state of affairs.

Further points to be highlighted are, for instance, the ongoing challenge of integrating Venezuelan oil into the world market due to US sanctions and milestones that affect the world, with both positive and negative consequences. As an example, the Covid-19 pandemic or the war between Russia and Ukraine have increased oil prices and forced countries to look for different options, such as Venezuela.



During the GIMUN Annual Conference 2023, the countries of the Organización de los Estados Americanos and the delegation of Nicolás Maduro have debated in order to reach an agreement on solutions to the economic crisis that Venezuela is currently facing. Despite the discrepancies between delegations, agreements have finally been reached such as the creation of an impartial, transparent and external system to supervise the next elections as well as measures to improve access to goods and services for citizens.





"If you want lasting peace, you have to cultivate social justice"

Gilbert F. Hougbo, ILO Director-General

Elisa Allegra Ferrante

The GIMUN Annual Conference 2023 gathered students and young people from all over the world at the International Labour Organization (ILO), where they not only played the role of diplomats, but they have also been confronted with today's main issues within the international relations field. They debated, for example, on issues related to human rights, forgotten populations, workers', children's and refugees' rights, the use of mass destruction oriented weapons, different conventions and comitology.



The closing ceremony of the GIMUN Annual Conference 2023 gave to all the participants the opportunity to meet ILO Director-General Gilbert F. Hougbo and to hear his words of closure.

Who is Gilbert F. Hougbo?

Gilbert F. Hougbo was the Prime Minister of Togo from September, 2008 to July, 2012. In 2013, he was elected as ILO Deputy Director-General. Since 2017, he has served as President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and in March 2022 he was appointed ILO Director-General by the governing body of the organization, which took office on the 1st of October 2022.

According to Mr. Hougbo "Nowadays, more than half of the world's population has no access to social protection. Multilateralism has become increasingly vulnerable and, for this reason, young people are responsible for our world and have to find a solution for the inequalities within it, but also fight for the access to a better social justice". Thus, the protection of the environment and the development of the different societies and economies must go hand in hand in order to solve those inequalities.

How to take concrete action?

In the course of history, human beings underwent radical changes. Some of these changes were positive and others negative, for example the ones caused by natural catastrophes and wars. Despite these negative changes, nothing is lost. For example, Artificial Intelligence (AI) will bring unthinkable damage to the social and employment fabric of our countries because "as millions of jobs will be lost, millions of new jobs will be created", Mr. Hougbo said. For this reason, we have to be ready to embrace the future with enthusiasm and hope.



Where to start to make a difference?

For sure, young people who invest their resources within the international relations field are the starting point to make a difference because, by learning and acquiring different skills, one day they will be able to help institutional bodies change things. The GIMUN Annual Conference is an example of what young people between 20 and 25 years old can acquire, because debating on international relations–related issues leads not only to the extent of the problem, but also to different solutions in order to solve it.





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Geneva International Model United Nations (GIMUN) is a non-governmental organization with special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations based in Geneva. Run entirely by students its aim is to promote the ideals and principles of the United Nations by giving students the chance to participate in educational events.

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