ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2021

A LOOK BACK AT THE CONFERENCE

PRIORITIES IN THE NEW AGE: RESHAPING THE FUTURE
PRESS

Besma Abdallah
USG for Press

Anna Golikova
USG for Press

Tilia Benattou
Journalist

Barbara Tabea
Journalist

Chrystelle Dejean Servières
Journalist

TRANSLATION

Elisa Ruckstuhl
USG for translation

Coralie Prost
USG for translation

Translators
Hugo Magrit

Jade Le Bellego
Camille Bays
Aude Perrin
Leonor Emery
Macha Bellec
Athina Danhier
Mathias Pire
Kristian Walters
Katherine Laidlaw

DESIGN

Besma Abdallah
USG for Press
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1  Online when there is no “offline”: a sign of the times.
2  A brief commentary on the UNICEF committee
3  Alone Together
5  Hello UNOOSA. I Want to Play a Game.
7  The GiMUN Gossip Phenomenon
8  The Security Council through the Eyes of a Journalist.
10 Interviews

MEDIA

www.gimun.org
Online when there is no “offline”: a sign of the times

By Tilia Benattou

As we are stranded at home still, most events must be postponed or held online, as was the case for the GIMUN conference. At the beginning, confidence levels were high. After all, for an event mainly managed by youths, how hard could it be to use exclusively online ways of communication? It turned out to be not quite so easy.

Indeed, despite the best efforts of the organizers, the use of many different platforms was quite difficult to order: Discord, Zoom, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram… A lot of information had to be transmitted accordingly to whomever it concerned, both before and during the conference. Among the many notifications received, some were doubtlessly lost in the world wide web along the way.

This is one of the most obvious particularities of an online conference: anyone can be reached at all times through a dematerialized message, so why stick to a particular schedule? Many exchanges occurred quite randomly on many different applications – sometimes seen, sometimes missed – which caused quite the need for repetition throughout the conference.

But no matter, the participants’ determination pushed through, and everyone was accounted for during key moments of the sessions. Being able to play their part from home, rather than having travelled to an unfamiliar environment could have made the work of a delegate easier, in a way. However finding their dematerialized footing proved even more challenging.

Once zoom links were accessed and recordings turned on, problems began. Participants had to rename themselves into the countries they were representing but did not have the platform clearance to do so. Chairs had to manage a troubling conference application who randomly reset the data they were trying to input. Some connections cut, some had terrible audios. All in all, we witnessed the inevitable weaknesses of an online event.

Once these pesky technical details were taken care of, the conference merrily carried on. Quite obviously, an online event creates a dephasing feeling. Without physical presence, a vital part of the conversation hinging around body language, slight tone nuances, is gone. The exchanges were harder, because the missing elements sometimes impeded comprehension between participants. The debates were therefore not as clear-cut as they probably would have been had the conference taken place physically.

On the matter of face-to-face interaction, participants also had less opportunities to discuss outside sessions. Even though some social activities were planned, some did not attend them since they represented even more time spent “alone” in front of their computer. They preferred to return to their “real” lives rather than try to socialize in these strange, internet-abled meetings – as well-intended as they were. Reaching out to new people is always difficult and proved to be even more so when occurring through online platforms.

The conference nonetheless concluded without a hitch. Despite all the obstacles met, the participants bravely overcame them all. In the past year, most of us had to quickly discover and conquer various communication applications to face the challenges of a society reshaped by the pandemic. The fact that this event was able to proceed as usual – despite its format change – is a testimony of our resilience in these trying times.
A brief commentary on the UNICEF committee

By Tilia Benattou

After the introductory first session, the real work began. The UNICEF committee had quite the agenda to work on, revolving around the facilitation of the integration of refugee and migrant children into their new societies. They successfully raised most of the urgent concerns thanks to involved speakers who did not shy away from taking the floor to defend their stands.

An important question raised was the exact definition of "migrant" versus "refugee". Saudi Arabia’s representative reminded that while the former is an umbrella term encompassing anyone who left their country by choice to improve their own situation, the latter describes people in life-or-death situations, forced to flee persecution. Too often both are considered as a unique problem, when in fact each group faces its own challenges. Every delegate agreed that no matter their status children should be offered help, adapted to their unique wants and needs.

Because migrant and refugee children left everything they ever knew behind, accessing a fair and specifically tailored education is key to easily blend in their new countries. However, as the delegate from Cuba reminded, their status is a peculiar and challenging one – from which stems xenophobia. And the issue of their integration gradually worsened as COVID-19 swept away any sense of normalcy from the process.

For this reason, the pandemic was at the heart of many motions raised by the delegates. They emphasized that in many undeveloped countries no alternative measures to face-to-face classes had been implemented, for lack of funds and technological resources. Furthermore, even if e-learning systems were actively used, most of those children would not own any of the devices needed to follow along, or even know how to use them. Delegates of the Republic of China and of the United States both agreed that some sort of e-learning training should be created, with possible equipment loans.

The delegate of the United Kingdom then mentioned the psychological impact of COVID-19 on these children. Confinement measures only reinforced their isolation from society, as many of them found themselves locked in crowded camps. To address this situation, China’s representative proposed the creation of a Covid Watch Cell which would offer support to children and their families on pandemic-related issues: this could be an opportunity for the international community to join forces.

Funding was also a priority issue. The UNHCR brought up the creation of advertisement campaigns to raise awareness among the general population and private donors. With some help from the Chair, the delegates shifted from simple ideas to actual solutions, with the presentation of a Global Pool Fund cleverly regrouping and then allocating resources. All delegates were intent on ensuring its smooth functioning, based on international cooperation – the only way to find long-term solutions.

A cooperation which was soon put to the test in the final sessions dedicated to the revision of the Resolution Draft. The countries in attendance had different stances on refugees and migrants but also on education policies, sometimes difficult to work around. They nevertheless succeeded in writing a cleverly worded proposition that would satisfy all parties.

The representatives agreed on a course of action that could doubtlessly improve the situation of refugee and migrant children all over the world.
Alone Together

By Chrystelle Dejean Servières

In the middle of a pandemic, what was it like to be a reporter for the GIMUN press team? Don’t be fooled by the title: this article will not just consist of a shameless attempt to tug at its readers’ heartstrings. Or will it?

Another year, and yet another conference that was held online. It might already sound like routine for many of us, but for GIMUN and its delegates, it was a blood-soaked nightmarish hellscape in the making. In short, it was just my kind of event.

Just kidding, I wasn’t buying it. Not right away, at least. I have to admit that when I first applied to be part of GIMUN’s journalist team, what I had in mind was the jaw-dropping opportunity to go to Geneva and waltz in, proudly wearing a shiny “PRESS” access card around my neck. So what got me into this, you ask? Well, I had a very serious conversation about a completely unrelated matter with a dear friend—whose name shall not be disclosed. It went about like this:

“Do you think we could have a cat on our lap when we work remotely?”
“We’re still in school, it’s not like it really matters.”
“But do you think we could?”
“No.”
“You can’t even tell if I have one on my lap right now.”
“You don’t have a cat.”
“That’s beside the point.”

That was the final straw. I was just too curious—and not just about whether or not it would be a good idea to try and test it—but also to see if I could actually make it. And for anyone wondering, yes. We were procrastinating in a breakout room. Gasp.

While the perspective of bringing my cat to GIMUN did sweeten the deal, it’s not like I needed much nudging. In case you’ve failed to realise, I like writing, and the conference being held remotely took nothing away from that. It was still the perfect setting to make new friends—finally!—put my skills to the test and have fun doing so. What I had not thought beforehand, however, was how on Earth I was going to do my job. The conference was to be held online, so any info I could gather on what a normal day at GIMUN looks like was about as useful to me as a butter knife is to a horse.

Being a journalist takes more than just witty lines and drinking hipster coffee. It takes what I like to call gentle persuasion. Indeed, how could I be expected to interview delegates if I was not going to be able to jump them during their break? Assuming they wouldn’t just hibernate—you know, like I never tend to during online classes—I was still unsure about what exactly a remotely attending journalist would be asked to do.

Turns out, it’s a lot of listening and writing! Who knew, right? I also proved to be a lot of making attendees uneasy by telling them not to pay attention to the shady-looking, muted “journalist” that was perpetually switching between conferences. No doubt my job would have been a lot more fun if it had been possible to attend... Well, you know, the way we normally do.

Of course, there was never any doubt in my mind about one thing: I was going to do this, and people were going to enjoy it—even if I was not going to be able to physically force them to this year. Oh well. I was just going to make do with what I got.
One of the first things that was very clear this year is that our writing could make or break us. That does not just apply to journalism. Even just in the way I was going to communicate with the delegates or with my superiors, my writing can make me look smart or it can make me look stupid. It can make me seem fun, or kind, or incompetent all the way to downright untrustworthy. And—worst of all—it could make me boring.

Being able to communicate well is not just a nice touch to our résumé. It is absolutely necessary—even more so in a context where in-person meetings are a hot commodity. In a time-challenged world dominated by short, snappy, witty headlines and tweets and captions, the way we write determines whether or not we’ll make it out of the fray.

I’m tempted to insert something here about how stories have a remarkable capacity to move our souls as one, to connect us even when we’re apart through a shared experience. But I like to think I’m better than a tear-jerker. There is, however, one undeniable perk to this whole ordeal. As ridiculous as it sounds, I did manage to become the very first journalist to ever attend GIMUN’s annual conference with their cat on their lap.

Take that, dear friend whose name shall not be disclosed.
Hello UNOOSA. I Want to Play a Game.

By Chrystelle Dejean Servières

2021 saw a brand-new committee join the GIMUN family. As such, I did not really know what to expect from the sessions when I wrote my pre-conference article. So, what did I get right, and—what you’re really here for—where did I miss?

**Statement number 1—**
UNOOSA’s delegates are polite, well-kept, soft-spoken, complete and utter nerds

**MISS** Let’s just get this out of the way. I am actually a bit ashamed of that one, but I’ll say it: I was completely wrong about the committee being made up of starry-eyed youngsters hoping for their resolutions to set the course of the next decade of space exploration. In fact, I can say first-hand that few delegates have been as driven—and as brutal—as the ones that were assigned the UNOOSA portfolio. And I mean brutal. From start to finish, I was almost glad the meeting was online. I genuinely have no idea how the sessions would have gone down had all these delegates been put in the same room. I suppose UN headquarters security does search you upon arrival—but at this point I would have been worried about leaving them with their pens.

**Statement number 2—The main focus: making space travel sustainable**

**MISS** A miss—again. It was weapons of course. I might have been the starry-eyed nerd on that one. But can you really blame me? It’s not like I could have written much about that topic in the first place. I mean, I’m a journalist. If you take my advice on safety around orbital nuclear weapons, then you probably deserve whatever happens to you.
Managing space debris did make it into the debate—but clearly, they did not steal the spotlight, especially in regards to the resolutions.

**Statement number 3—Doing this on Zoom will yield benefits**

**HIT** Surprising, I know! Can we take a minute and be impressed by me? While this statement did not make it onto my previous article, I can say for certain that I did expect the conference to make up for its lack of enjoyability with its efficiency gains. As probably everyone reading this has realised by now, everything takes up more time when it is done remotely. Everything. From learning to debating to negotiating what will and what will not be drafted into the resolution, our delegates had much less wiggling room when it came to overtalking. That last bit was already difficult by GIMUN’s speaking time system anyway, but online? No way around it. With a clock displayed right in front of you and seconds ticking away, it’s harder to pretend you didn’t see that—or that you were just so passionate about what you were saying. No one, in the four days that this conference lasted, even looked like they wanted to try it.

**Statement number 4—UNOOSA is here to stay**

**HIT** Believe it or not, but some delegates actually pulled the “if we don’t do this right this will be the first and last time UNOOSA gets an invite” card. Gasp. Talk about pressure. One delegate’s words in particular—whose name shall remain a secret—struck me as a particularly menacing scarecrow: “But, for the integrity and longevity of this committee, I urge you, delegates, to reconsider what just made it into our joint resolution. It’s quality over quantity, WE DON’T HAVE TO DO THIS! I yield my time.” Ouch. I will never get used to how they can calmly say that last bit. For
people who are interested, no, that’s not exactly what was said. The original was way longer. What I put is just enough, however, for any attendee to recognise the agitator—and for that agitator to be sweating bullets right about now. But back to the point: turns out, more than a few delegates had the added pressure of holding the fate of their entire committee in their hands. But honestly? If I were to take a wild guess on that one, I think we can all agree that nobody wants this to be a one-time thing. Or, at the very least, no one will think it was anybody’s fault—so you’ll be fine, dear delegate whose name shall be kept secret!

And there you have it folks! Two out of four. I honestly thought it would be worse. Oh, and don’t worry about winning or losing this one. You’ll get nothing either way. “See” you around!
The GIMUN Gossip Phenomenon

By Barbara Tabea

The first online Geneva Annual Conference was not only a place to learn and debate but also a platform for creating memories. During the four-day conference, delegates could not restrain themselves from appreciating each other’s beauty or even roasting each other. Some delegates forgot about their home training and diplomatic etiquette during committee sessions, and all these happenings provided enough information for making dozens of memes.

Everyone would agree without hesitation that the face of this year’s GIMUN gossip was Apostolos Symeonidis, one of the chairs of the Security Council committee. He was the talk of town, liked by many because of his charming facial features. People were even willing to change their sexualities to get some alone time with this “Greek Kouros.” He probably had the most memes at this year’s conference. GIMUN could have easily made an entire season of “Keeping up with Apostolos” since there was a new meme of him each hour that passed.

GIMUN gossip would never be complete without talking about the delegate of Greece from the Security Council. This delegate happened to be taking a road trip while attending debates. Rumor has it that he was debating while driving, hands down for this delegate for creating his own etiquette for diplomatic meetings. He kept everyone wondering and mind blown by his choice of venue for attending the event. It, therefore, did not come as a surprise that the delegate of Greece performed well in Security Council rankings for the funniest delegate.

Moving on to the UNICEF committee, aka thirsty committee, the UK’s delegate made the headlines of the gossip column because of her outstanding beauty. The male species from all committees wanted to have a one-on-one with her, but to their disappointment, the delegate announced that she had a ring on her finger. Generally, UNICEF ladies were a big talk at this year’s conference; their beauty turned heads and hampered concentration during debates.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world was ECOFIN which presented the fewest memes at GIMUN. This committee was the exact opposite of the Security Council. Whereas Security Council delegates were determined to create friendships, ECOFIN delegates preferred to leave the conference as enemies. The highlight of their debates was the unmoderated caucus before the presentation of their draft resolution. The house turned into a battlefield and went out of control. After deciding to merge resolutions, delegates failed to pick out the three people to sponsor the resolution and present it to the rest of the committee. The delegates of the US, UK, China, and the Philippines all contributed enormously to the working paper, but they had to decide on just three people.

Delegate of the US claimed to have written many clauses, so he put himself out there as the best person to present the resolution. This delegate fearlessly spoke about his decision to kick out the delegate of the UK from the list of sponsors. And of course, the delegation of the UK had to react and condemn delegate of the US for his lack of respect for diplomatic protocol. Fortunately, the Philippines’ delegate played “Superman” and saved the day by giving up sponsorship to the UK, USA, and China. But the fighting did not end here. During the presentation of the draft resolution, the delegate of Canada had a counter argument and a grammatical correction for literally every clause in the resolution. Ten minutes into the presentation and the chair was going crazy because of her
endless comments. Surprisingly, the same chair gave the Canadian delegation a shoutout at the closing ceremony. What a turn of events!

In summary, charm, ill-will, mental breakdowns, comedy, these four words sufficiently describe this year’s online GIMUN conference. Are you still hungry for gossip? Make sure you join next year’s Geneva Annual Conference to get firsthand information and watch events as they unfold.
The Security Council through the Eyes of a Journalist

By Barbara Tabea

The Geneva Annual Conference officially kicked off on 4th March 2021. As always, it brought together delegates from different walks of life, educational backgrounds, and countries. One could feel the diversity by just looking at the various delegates' names as they joined their first zoom session. Everyone started settling into their committees, but mine is to take you through the journey of the heart of the United Nations, the Security Council.

Under the guidance of two incredible chairs, Anna Golikova and Apostolos Symeonidis, the Security Council committee started this year's Model UN simulation by learning the rules of procedure and getting acquainted with each other. Afterwards, they started bonding through Netflix. Everyone had a chance to talk about their favorite Netflix Series, and short discussions were held on famous series such as Sex Education, Black Mirror, and Sex and the City. It was fascinating to see how tastes vary from person to person. Some people preferred binge-watching series that made Netflix top 10, while others were more captivated by documentaries and reboots of old series.

Debates kicked off on the second day, and the Security Council had a task to find ways of tackling cyber threats in this era. Delegates showed an advanced understanding of the topic at hand, which demonstrated their preparedness and engagement in extensive research. The various delegations started the day by presenting an overview of the countries assigned to them and those countries' performance in the area of cybersecurity. The most stressful part of that day's debate was finding a definition of cybersecurity and other related terms. This tough journey to finding working definitions was led by India's delegation, China's delegation, the UK delegation, USA delegation, and other delegations followed their lead. In the evening, the delegates retired to their WhatsApp group chat where they cultivated an air of relaxation by sharing memes. Most of these memes actually became favorites of the GIMUN Gossip column. The UNSC group chat also served as a platform for interaction, expression of opinions and creation of friendships.

Day two of debating came in a flash. Delegates had finally agreed on how to define primary terms and they started forming coalitions to draft resolutions. They had to focus their debates on the solutions to the problem of cybercrime. After several unmoderated caucuses, the Security Council delegates agreed to have one draft resolution, which was voted upon and passed. Among the key takeaways from the resolution were creation of a plan to provide funds to less developed nations for fighting cybercrime and global cooperation through international institutions to create laws and reduce cyberattacks.

On day four, delegates gathered one last time at this year's conference. The day started with a bonding session which included unofficial rankings such as cutest person, funniest person, most likely to go to jail, most likely to become a dictator etc. Delegates were in high spirits as they discussed their choices with the chairs who displayed the results of the vote. Eventually, delegates had to wrap up their four-day conference with other committees at the closing ceremony. At this ceremony, delegates of India and UAE got honorable mentions for their eloquence and outstanding presentations during debates. The delegate of France won the best delegate for his ability to
deliver well thought of speeches during the conference. All delegates of the Security Council were commended for their excellent participation and the chairs also gave shoutouts to the delegates of China, UK, Australia, and the USA. After the closing ceremony, delegates returned to their lives before the conference, but one thing is definite, the memories created will forever be engraved in their minds.

Interviews

Musa Saheed (China) By Chrystelle Dejean Servières

So, yesterday was the welcoming session. How was it? How do you feel about today’s session?

The welcoming was great because it helped us break the ice, get to know each other more, and honestly made me less nervous as everyone was so nice.

This is the very first time UNOOSA gets a place in GIMUN debates! What are you most excited about and what are your predictions on what the main focus will be?
I think it’s great that UNOOSA has been included because outer space is a topic people don’t discuss very often and it’s important to talk about this. The main focus will definitely be on whether space should be militarized or not and whether it should be privatized.

Whew! I have to say, that was the session with the most heated debates! We didn’t even take a break at 1:30 p.m.! Not bad for newcomers. So how was it? Are there any issues you think could have been discussed further?

Yes! It was really draining but also so fun because of the high level of debate. Everyone is so smart and committed! I think we could have discussed the privatization of space more definitely. We definitely will overcome our points of contention. I’m looking forward to lots of cooperation and diplomacy shown on behalf of the delegates.

Veronica (Germany) By Tilia Benattou

Many points were raised. Do you feel like your country's were fully discussed? Do you think the draft resolution is as exhaustive as can be?
I think my country's were fully discussed. As all the countries would like to cooperate together, the draft resolution is exhaustive that included discussion in different aspects thoroughly.
On the subject of NCDs, two main solutions were discussed : environmental control and educational reforms. According to you, which one would be the most realistic to implement, and have the most effective results?
Education reforms is always necessary but it really takes time. Using laws and regulations to control the environmental pollution is the most effective way at the moment. But still, people would break the rules if they don’t understand the current situation and have an incentive to change.

Seeing as this is the last questionnaire of the conference, how would you describe the experience? Did you enjoy it? Learn new things? Make new friends? Share your thoughts!

This is my first time to join international MUN conference. It’s really intensive but fun. I’m not good at speaking English, it’s a challenging job for me but I think everyone is considerate and sometimes encourage me in the chat box. It is an impressive experience to make new friends all over the world as I have never been to a conference with about twenty people that come from different countries. We listen to music at our leisure time, we chat, we enjoy our times. It’s also a great opportunity to know about cultures about other countries. I really really enjoy it — it’s a virtual conference though. I hope that I can see all of you next year face-to-face.

Aena Khan (Saudi Arabia) By Tilia Benattou

The first day was eventful, that’s for sure! What was the most challenging part for you? (A technical aspect, a peculiar discussion or topic...)

Being able to talk coherently because I panicked and started talking really fast without saying anything relevant. Also being able to meet the other delegates (who are very nice) as I’m very socially awkward.

The funding is obviously a key point. There were however many different propositions on how to use it. Which would be the most useful, in your opinion? Did the debate change your initial stance?

Based on country stance, the funding would be most beneficial through being donated to developing and developed nations who possess the most refugees however may not have the efficient funds to help pay for the educational resources or cost of living of refugees and migrants. Therefore, if the funding money or donations through resources for education or technological devices (due to e-learning circumstances) were given, it would be an effective use of the fund. The debate did somewhat change my opinion, it opened my perspective to new experiences and solutions that could be more effective.

A lot of time was spent on making the draft resolution as exhaustive as can be. How do you think this will help in future sessions?
The resolution would be helpful in future sessions as it showcases the issues and agreements each individual country faces and generates more solutions to find a middle ground to overcome a majority of these obstacles.
Geneva International Model United Nations

GIMUN JOURNAL | Volume  2

Geneva International Model United Nations (GIMUN) is a non-governmental organisation 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.

© 2021 GIMUN. All rights reserved.