



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

UNU-MERIT

UNU-MERIT PRESENCE AT THE EUROPEAN MODEL OF UNITED NATIONS

On April 17-20, Maastricht hosted the European Model of United Nations (EuroMUN 2008). This high-profile event was organised by the United Nations Student Association of the University of Maastricht (www.unsa-maastricht.org), and attracted more than 400 participants from all across the world.

Thanks to the coordination by *UNNetworking*, an initiative at UNU-MERIT that valorises the Institute's affiliation with the broader UN community and creates interactive channels with UN institutions and other relevant external actors, several UNU-MERIT PhD researchers were invited to participate in this event in the capacity of Special Advisors to different committees. Many UNU-MERIT PhD researchers intend to pursue their careers in the UN system upon graduation; hence EuroMUN provided an excellent opportunity to walk in the shoes of UN experts for a few days.

Moreover, UNU-MERIT promoted the PhD programme and the Graduate Fellowships in Economics, Innovation and Technology at the Market of Opportunities at EuroMUN. A select group of students were very much interested in specific topics of the Institute's research work.



On the photo: advisors Bilal Mirza, Abdul Baseer Qazi, Shuan SadreGhazi and Sergey Filippov

Sergey Filippov was Advisor to the **Security Council** (meeting dedicated to the hot topic of the situation in Kosovo) and played the role as the Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. He shares his observations:



“EuroMUN proved to be a great and enjoyable experience! Right from the commencement of the session, as in the real life, two main camps were swiftly formed: US-led pro-independence coalition (arguing about the uniqueness of the Kosovo case) and Russia-led no-independence group (insisting on the universality of the international law). The discussions were heated; nonetheless it was gratifying to note a high degree of professionalism among the delegates as they presented compelling arguments to substantiate their points of view. Although it was rather hard, I stayed impartial for the entire duration of the sessions. Acting in the good faith and according to the highest UN ethical standards, I sought to provide necessary information, and tried to bridge the diverging stances in a number of ways. I hope my input was helpful in passing the Resolution of the Security Council.”

Shuan SadreGhazi was Advisor to the **World Trade Organisation** (WTO). His participation was of utmost importance as acknowledged by the chair at the Closing Session.



“EuroMUN was a great opportunity to exercise multilateral discussion and simulate debating international affairs and real-world issues in an organized way. It was my pleasure to be part of this practice and play a role as advisor by providing some hints and guidance during the sessions. Heated discussion among young delegates and their final declaration was a proof of their vast potential to become the next generation of those who set about a better future for the world.”

Abdul Baseer Qazi was Advisor to the SpecPol Committee, which is responsible for ‘**Special Political and Decolonization**’ issues. The Committee in the very beginning decided through voting to take up and discuss the plight of the Sahrawi people living in the Western Sahara region. The other issue which was put down in favour of the Sahrawi was the right of self-determinations for the ‘First Nations’ of Canada. Mr. Qazi comments on the sessions as being,



“a unique experience in diplomacy, a hands-on training in negotiations and the first lessons in state-level lobbying. The ambience, though very formal, was conducive to learning-by-doing. Though the advisory role was not very well defined, the numerous discussions out of the actual committee sessions with the chair and the troika made me figure out the optimal level of engagement and input. The level of argumentation and debate amongst the various delegates was proof of their professionalism and it was hard to find opportunities where my advice would add real value. Altogether it was a very good simulation of nations interacting all together and I not only got a very positive impression of the EuroMUN, but have also developed an appreciation for the real-life situations of diplomacy at International level.”

Conrad Schmidt-Bens was Advisor to SOCHUM, the **Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee**.



“My involvement with EuroMUN provided a great opportunity to meet other young ambitious people from diverse cultural background who share a genuine concern for the challenges to world society and the willingness to act upon it. A major part of the meetings were dedicated to procedural issues which meant a great learning experience for myself and a familiarisation with the bureaucratic nature of world politics. As far as substantive matters were concerned the advisor enjoys high authority and my input was highly valued in this regard. At next EuroMUN I will help bringing substantive matters more to the forefront.”

Fernando Santiago-Rodriguez was Advisor to the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the **World Environment Organization (WEO)**. Being currently abroad, his advice took place mostly by commenting on the draft resolutions advanced by the delegates to each of those Organizations.



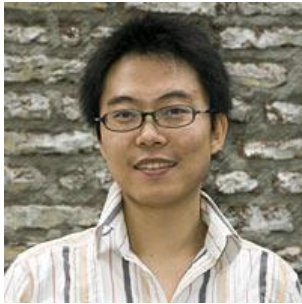
“My participation at EuroMUN was rather sui-generis having to wait for documents to arrive and then, taking advantage of time differences between me and Maastricht, I worked literally overnight to comment and hopefully provide some useful points to guide the discussions. I was happy to see the several coincidences in the topics addressed by both WHO and WEO with regards to climate change and possible ways to contend its likely impacts on human health, notably by further advancing on joint developments and technological collaboration between countries irrespective of their level of economic attainment. I am confident Delegates would come about with interesting suggestions to tackle these and related problems.”

Bilal Mirza got an opportunity to be part of the **Human Rights Council** as an Advisor, which addressed the most pressing issues regarding child rights and their growing abuse in many parts of the world. He explained his experiences in his words:



“EuroMUN was an entirely a unique opportunity with high degree of professionalism exhibited by graduate and undergraduate students from across the academic disciplines around the world. At the Human Rights Council, where I got the opportunity to mingle with delegates from more than 35 countries, it was a true manifestation of an ambassadorial code of conduct, with utmost respect, value and importance to other’s opinions and perspectives. The occasion also brought me an understanding of the present challenges faced by the Human Rights Council, especially regarding the child abuse and the child slavery in many developing countries.”

Jun Hou was Advisor to **The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**.



“The participation in EuroMUN provided me a great opportunity to hear different ideas and discuss with participants from all over the world, especially for discussing international economic and social issues and for formulating policy recommendations in the ECOSOC forum, which I believe also plays a key role in fostering international cooperation for development.”

Daniel Vertesy was Advisor to DISEC (**Disarmament and International Security Committee**).



“To deal with concerns that have not yet become imminent crises but have the potential to become one, the First Committee of the UN General Assembly provides a unique forum to discuss and decide on disarmament and security matters. At EuroMUN, this committee gave a brilliant opportunity for young people to address the topics with their mind set on a longer perspective while remaining as close to political realities as well-simulated government interests dictated it. I am sure it was a formative experience for all on how fragile the world can be if there is no common long-term focus.”

Overall, constructive involvement of the PhD researchers into the decision-making process at the Model was highly appreciated both by the organisers and delegates to EuroMUN. This first exercise is expected to become a vital contribution to the process of strengthening the ties between UNU-MERIT and the UN Student Association of the Maastricht University. *UNNetworking* is looking forward to further develop this collaboration to a state of excellence for future events. Furthermore, it looks forward to tap into the lessons drawn from this experience for the benefit of collaborations with other institutions and stakeholders.