

# Dialogue to Responsibility

Model United Nations Initiative

Witten/Herdecke University

2022

## Preface

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

welchen fundamentalen Wert die Diplomatie für ein friedliches Zusammenleben hat, erleben wir tagtäglich, wenn globale Konflikte über Dialog und Verhandlung entschärft und mit Hilfe der Staatengemeinschaft Brücken über scheinbar unüberwindbare Grenzen geschlagen werden.

Leider erleben wir auch, aktuell mitten in Europa, dass diplomatische Wege scheitern und Autokraten Waffen sprechen lassen, um ihre Interessen durchzusetzen. Umso wichtiger ist es, jungen Menschen die Werte und das Konzept der Vereinten Nationen zu vermitteln und den ungemeinen Mehrwert für diese wertvolle Staatengemeinschaft nachvollziehbar zu machen. Wer als Student:in an der Model United Nations-Konferenz teilnimmt, erfährt in der Rolle als Delegierte oder Delegierter die hohe Verantwortung, die die Vertreter:innen der 193 Mitgliedsstaaten haben und geht dabei in einen intensiven interkulturellen Austausch, der wohl einmalig für diese jungen Menschen ist. Dabei nehmen die Studierenden nicht die Perspektive ihrer eigenen Nation ein, sondern müssen sich tief in die Strukturen eines für sie fremden Landes einarbeiten und zu Interessenvertreter:innen werden. Ein Land mit einer vielleicht ganz anderen Geschichte, einem anderen politischen System, anderen Konflikten sowie einer ganz anderen Rolle in der Weltgemeinschaft. Allein das ist schon eine große Aufgabe für die vielen Studierenden, die jährlich nach New York reisen. So freut es mich umso mehr, dass die Wittener Delegation, die das Land Ägypten repräsentierte, in diesem Jahr zusätzlich mit unterschiedlichen Awards für ihr besonderes Engagement geehrt wurde.

Der aktuelle Angriffskrieg in der Ukraine lässt uns einmal mehr spüren, dass die Erhaltung des Friedens die wichtigste Aufgabe in der Welt ist. Die internationale Zusammenarbeit und das Engagement junger Menschen ist wichtiger denn je, um die Werte der Vereinten Nationen zu erhalten. Dazu trägt die Model United Nations-Konferenz maßgeblich bei.

Im Namen unserer Universität möchte ich den Organisator:innen der Konferenz sehr herzlich danken und allen Teilnehmer:innen wünschen, dass sie ihre Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse im besten Sinne wirksam in die Welt tragen!

Prof. Dr. Martin Butzlaff

Präsident der Universität Witten/Herdecke

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*We experience every day the fundamental value of diplomacy for peaceful coexistence when global conflicts are de-escalated through dialogue and negotiation and bridges are built across seemingly insurmountable borders with the help of the international community.*

*Unfortunately, we also experience, currently in the heart of Europe, that diplomatic ways fail and autocrats use weapons to enforce their interests. It is therefore all the more important to convey the values and the concept of the United Nations to young people and to make them understand the immense added value of this precious community of states. Whoever takes part in the Model United Nations Conference as a student experiences in the role of a delegate the high responsibility that the representatives of the 193 member states have and enters into an intensive intercultural exchange that is probably unique for these young people. The students do not take the perspective of their own nation but have to familiarize themselves deeply with the structures of a country that is foreign to them and become stakeholders. A country with perhaps a completely different history, a different political system, different conflicts, and a completely different role in the world community. That alone is a major task for the many students who travel to New York every year. So, I am all the more pleased that the Witten delegation, which represented the country of Egypt, was also honored this year with various awards for its special commitment.*

*The current war of aggression in Ukraine makes us feel once again that keeping the peace is the most important task in the world. International cooperation and engagement of young people is crucial in order to preserve the values of the United Nations. The Model United Nations conference makes a significant contribution to this.*

*On behalf of our university, I would like to thank the organizers of the conference and wish all participants that they will effectively carry their experiences and insights into the world in the best sense!*

*Prof. Dr. Martin Butzlaff*

*President of Witten/Herdecke University*

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## Introduction

What will our future be like? How can we shape it?

The challenges we face are trying. Climate crisis, war, and global injustice cannot be solved nationally, yet they are more urgent than ever. Even though the issues are complex and seem unsolvable at times, we believe that they can be dealt with if the global community works together. Each group delegate has the will and motivation to take responsibility and make change happen. Whatever subject we are studying and wherever we will end up, the firm belief in multilateralism and global justice unites us beyond Model United Nations. We are proud that this year's delegation was one of the most diverse so far and acted as one when it came to the core. The very values that our university, the spirit of Model United Nations, and the Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft share were reflected in our group as well: Freedom, Peace, and Social Responsibility.

This report wants to provide an overview of the whole conference and an introduction to the idea of the Model United Nations. Furthermore, each delegation has written a brief collection of their experiences, thoughts, and

learnings during and after the conference. We hope to enlighten the same spark in you that this experience has inspired us.

## The Conference

### Welcome to NMUN!

The New York Model United Nations Conference (NMUN) offers the remarkable opportunity to simulate the work of the United Nations. Students from all over the world attend the annual conference to learn about the work of the United Nations by representing the delegation of a chosen member state in various UN committees and negotiating critical matters in the field of international relations. Over four days, participants work feverishly to propose resolutions, addressing the very same issues as the UN itself. Topics include regional conflicts, peacekeeping, human rights, women and children, economic and social development, and the environment. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called participation in the conference an "inspiring display of commitment and global citizenship." The UN recognizes the added value of the simulations and actively supports hosting them through

its UN4MUN initiative. The National Model United Nations (NMUN) Board sponsors these conferences and related activities. Incorporated in 1968 as a nonprofit educational corporation in the United States, it is a recognized Nongovernmental Organization associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications. Conferences are held annually in New York City (NYC) and Washington, DC, among other locations. Over the past ten years, the NYC conference has grown significantly, with over 5,000 students participating in the two meetings this year. Universität Witten/Herdecke (UW/H) first attended in 2007 and has done so continuously over the past fifteen years.

In April 2022, we, a group of twenty students from three different UW/H faculties, flew to NYC to represent the Arab Republic of Egypt in ten committees. Our goal was to broaden our horizons in international political work and strengthen our diplomatic skills by negotiating various topics of global relevance. This year marked the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic started that the conference was participable back in person. Experiencing firsthand how decisions within the UN come into existence highlights how interdependent our world

has become and how heterogeneously they influence politics on a global, national and regional scale.

## The Rules of Procedure

The conference's focus is to represent the interests and agenda of the assigned country in various UN committees as realistic as possible. Therefore, it is essential to have deep background knowledge of the given country's political work and the viewpoints of other Member States to identify shared values and common ground before the committee sessions.

Each committee has a different agenda on specific policy issues in line with its mandate. The first step is to select one of the two proposed topics to be discussed. The intense negotiations and discussions ultimately aim to reach a consensus to get a formal resolution by the end of the conference. For this process to run smoothly, one must familiarize oneself with the rules of procedure of a UN conference and diplomatic negotiation methods. Specific steps are required on the way to a resolution that can be voted on. First, students have the opportunity to give an opening speech to present their state's opinion and point of view on the

current issue. In this way, nations with similar goals, opinions, and values can already begin to collaborate on solutions to the problem at hand. In NYC, this process is simplified by having two students work together in a committee. This allows one to follow the formal session, while the other delegate might work informally with other nations on drafting first ideas and possible solutions.

A lengthy process of negotiation and rewriting is involved in creating a draft resolution that can be presented to the chair of each committee. The resolution is later subject to a voting procedure if the chair raises no objections. The aim of NMUN is not only to provide students from all over the world with an insight into the work and structures of the United Nations but also to demonstrate the importance of diplomacy in a modern world and to promote intercultural experience and exchange. Also, it provides an excellent opportunity to work on skills essential to tackle 21 st-century problems efficiently. The 4C skills in question are 1) critical thinking and problem-solving skills, 2) creativity and innovation, 3) communication, and 4) collaboration (Khadzir & Sumarmi, 2020).

## Preparation is Key

The Arab Republic of Egypt was assigned to our university in the fall of 2021. Following an application and process, twenty-two students were selected. The application assignment included a letter of motivation and two questions about the country's political background and current political situation. In weekly meetings, the students first learned about the structure and working fields of the UN. Most importantly, students had to study the rules of procedure, which regulate how committee sessions work in practice, and the adequate vocabulary and grammar to use when drafting resolutions. On the more practical side, students began to write small opening speeches and working papers on various topics independently and presented them during the weekly seminar meetings. The preparation was entirely planned and executed by the students leading the Model United Nations student initiative at Universität Witten/Herdecke. One of the biggest challenges was fully adapting to Egypt's opinion on the topics. For this reason, we followed the advice to visit a MUN in Germany to gain a first real-life experience of how the formal procedures of the conference work and

how to fully adapt to a specific country. Most of the delegation attended the Bayern MUN virtually in February.

## The World of Diplomats – Our Visit to the Egyptian Embassy in Berlin

Our delegation was honored to be invited to the Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Germany in Berlin. After a very warm welcome by Ambassador Khaled Galal Abdelhamid, we learned interesting facts about the country we have been studying for the past month, its general attitude towards the United Nations and its importance, and the general strategy Egypt has within its UN membership. In our session, each committee had the opportunity to ask specific questions about their chosen topic, thus comparing their ideas and solutions, gained through countless hours of online research, with those of our representative country's official diplomats. Hearing their opinions on various pressing issues helped us prioritize what to push for in our negotiations on all the working papers we were involved in. Their expertise and detailed knowledge far exceeded what we could have researched in

advance. With their help, we all had it easier to distinguish between the more important and less important aspects of each issue and sharpen our goals for the upcoming committee meetings. At the end of the session, the entire delegation was treated to various snacks by the Embassy. This level of appreciation shown to us by taking time for us and presenting us with a gift further increased our motivation. Being aware that this was a simulation, we still felt the need to represent Egypt as authentically as possible. We were very grateful for all the insights we received during our time at the Embassy.

## A Great Experience

The exciting and very emotional opening ceremony in the grand room in the Hilton Midtown Hotel included a speech on the current situation in Ukraine, given by Natalia Mudrenko, Counselor to the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations. Afterward, we started working in our committees and bonding with other delegates. Even though we only spent a short time together, we quickly formed a community spirit, regardless of language or cultural background. In the following chapters, each committee



summarized their experience and gave their final thoughts on this exciting journey.

## Committee Reports

### Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) - Sebastian Erkens & Constantin Loy

Sebastian Erkens and Constantin Loy represented the Arab Republic of Egypt in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The topics before the committee were The Emerging Challenges of Synthetic Drug Trafficking and Incorporating a Human Rights Focus into International Drug Policies.

#### Lessons learned

Amidst an open war within Europe, it is crucial to remember that Model UN is thriving to simulate the best imaginable version of the UN rather than acting out the real tensions amongst member states. Both the Russian Federation and Ukraine were represented in our committee. In the role of Egypt, we were struggling to find our place between two blocs that were eventually not only hostile within their roles but also on a

personal level. We think this challenge is very much present in real-world diplomacy. Diplomats must not only be very well informed about all aspects of the topics at hand but also have the ability to separate their role and the level of personal relationship.

The United Nations and every other institution for international policy consist of the people mandated to facilitate change. People with very different cultural backgrounds, personal histories, communication styles, personalities, core values, and other differences also have different native languages.

In order to tackle problems on a worldwide scale effectively, it is of utmost importance to include all member states in the process of reaching a consensus, rather than enough to reach a majority to pass resolutions. Because merely passing resolutions is not the same as creating real solutions to the current problems. Member states must understand and fully support the solutions discussed for them to be effective.

This is especially important for finding practical solutions to effectively tackle the international drug trade. The COVID pandemic and resulting lockdowns highlighted how flexible drug producers

and smugglers are when finding new precursors or trafficking routes. Rigid arrangements between a few member states will not cut it. Solutions have to be as flexible and multilateral as possible to have any effect.

## Skills developed

MUN offers a range of skills to develop or refine. Conducting extensive research and coming up with a line of argumentation for a country's policies for the debate and gaining deep knowledge about possible solutions following both UN frameworks and the general policy spectrum of Egypt was insightful. We experienced the restraints and opportunities policymakers face and learned how to think in the same structured and goal-oriented way.

Apart from research competencies, MUN teaches its participants the art of compromise. Negotiations between multiple countries simultaneously make up a significant part of the conference. In order to have any impact, in the end, every member must be able and willing to compromise, which is sometimes the most challenging thing. Nevertheless, one skill that we would like to highlight is due to the nature of the participants. As the students come from around the

globe, one of the most important skills developed is to learn how to talk, negotiate and find common ground with people with various cultural backgrounds.

## Connections made

Especially during informal sessions, we were in close contact with our fellow working group delegates, the first and lowest level of consensus building. While each takes the perspective of their assigned countries, building a personal connection with as many delegates as possible is essential. Although the number of countries from which the delegates could participate was somewhat limited due to the ongoing COVID travel restrictions, many of those who did participate had roots all over the globe and brought their unique perspectives. We were amazed by the diversity in all dimensions and enjoyed listening to their personal stories and learning from their experiences.

Connections were made anywhere and anytime. Whether it was about the essential parts of the resolution, a thumbs up after a speech, or a conversation on the elevator after recognizing the Model UN badge, getting in touch was always easy, and

the interactions reflected the spirit of Model UN. Mutual respect, cooperation, and openness made finding people to spend the lunch breaks with relatively easy. We hope to recognize some familiar faces at the next conference or in our professional future.

### Value-added

The value of the MUN experience is hardly measurable. Our committee has put forward three resolutions consisting of 32 unique solutions which, to some degree, capture the spirit of the future. The young people who came together to discuss solutions for some of the most pressing issues this year will eventually take responsibility and direct the course of policies someday. Current-day policymakers might take a look into the documents that the commission has passed on Narcotic Drugs – or they might not. However, the ambition of MUN participants and our ambition was probably not to find the perfect solution for the world's challenges but to learn something. The most valuable takeaway from MUN for us is the non-material one: the memories of a great time, the unique experiences we had, and the skills we will use for the rest of our lives. We left New York with our hearts full of motivation to shape the world within our

respective areas and the firm belief that as a global society, we can and must come together and cooperate.

### Economic and Social Council Plenary (ECOSOC) - Aurora Mane & Luisa Schwab

Aurora Mane and Luisa Schwab represented the Arab Republic of Egypt in the Economic and Social Council Plenary (ECOSOC). The focus of this year's session of the ECOSOC committee was the realization of sustainable development and sustainable economic growth, discussing the two topics of "Realizing Sustainable Economic Growth by Achieving SDG8" and "Strengthening Partnerships for Sustainable Development in the least Developed Countries." The member states decided to start with the first topic, and due to the time limits, only opening speeches could address the least on the second topic. Two resolutions were passed emerging from two working papers on the first topic. Representing the Republic of Egypt for our delegation, it was crucial to highlight not only the challenges but also the chances connected to sustainable growth, especially regarding the recovery from

the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Republic of Egypt has made sustainable development and growth one of its top priorities and committed to several model projects for fostering green growth and green recovery. In order to share its own successful strategies and benefit from other experiences, one of Egypt's main objectives was to establish a partnership forum for enabling exchange not only among countries but also with private enterprises and national and global institutions. We were able to contribute this idea to the first resolution adopted by the ECOSOC. This specific point of the resolution was recommended by the committee's chair for its details and connection to existing UN bodies and resolutions.

One of the biggest challenges in collaboration among member states was their diversity concerning their economic structure, development, and cultural values. These differences led to vastly differentiating needs and proposals regarding sustainable development and growth. Furthermore, existing conflicts between member states (in this case, especially the war in Ukraine) made collaboration among those states difficult and frequently also placed constraints on other countries in

their choice of partners. However, as promoting "collaboration and cooperative resolution of conflict" is one of the primary missions of the MUN, the staff decided to do an intervention during the course of the conference on the topic of conflicts between member states, asking to limit the impact of these conflicts on the deliberations within committees especially if the conflict was not relevant to the discussed topics.

Regarding conflict solutions on a content level, to find common ground among a diverse group of member states, negotiations first concentrated on forming small groups of countries with similar ideas and focal points. In these groups, members then tried to formulate a unified idea or proposition, which then could be discussed among a larger group of states. This was a crucial step for substantiating and bundling ideas to simplify the discussion among a bigger group of countries. In this group discussion, countries had the chance to express their concerns about specific ideas. The group format hereby enabled a bilateral discussion among proponents and opponents of an idea, with other states acting as mediators. If in this format, no compromise could be reached, there was a vote among the members of a

working paper with the implementation of one veto right per country. However, all countries really focused on the idea of collaboration and finding common ground even on challenging topics, and so at least in our working paper group, no contested voting was required.

Regarding how our delegation fostered solutions that benefited the countries cooperating with us, it is worth mentioning that throughout the whole process, we kept in mind to integrate every delegation's perspective and main objective while simultaneously focusing on the goals we set ourselves. In this way, we set dialogues among delegations which enabled us to bargain by creating bridges taking into consideration each other's interests. An example of this can be seen with the proposal of creating a forum, a way in which we tried to converge different ideas into a concrete, implementable project. Many countries advocated for the establishment of channels to provide tools and expertise for the development of specific sectors. The forum effectively brought these ideas together, allowing for different objectives, a successful way to foster cooperation allowing for different interests to be met.

By allowing debates on which policies to implement and which need to prioritize, our delegation learned that international politics is all about negotiation and compromise. The trade-off is mainly about promoting national goals over strengthening international ties. Ultimately, establishing partners also has the potential to enlarge the scope of action when implementing national interests. The latter is what we learned during the course of the conference. Among the goals we pushed for the second topic, "Strengthening Partnerships for Sustainable in the Least Developed Countries", we considered south-south cooperation an essential tool to foster development among developing countries while promoting cooperation among them. Egypt was ready to be an example for such a type of partnership, given the efforts made by the country to support developing partners with women's rights by paying the contributions to the Women Development Organization (WDO), affiliated with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on behalf of 22 developing countries. This strategy, however, would have kept us from receiving the support of developing countries by focusing on south-south cooperations, something that



represented too much of a loss for those countries heavily reliant on western non-developing countries.

Finally, our gain on a personal level was much higher than what we learned in terms of international politics. Among many things, we improved our interpersonal skills while working with other delegates. Giving speeches played an important role, but being an active part of a working paper which eventually passed and keeping constant contact with other delegates to push our ideas and gather signatures was the central part of it. Eventually, being on another continent constituted the most considerable experience, something that confronted us with the "American" way of life. Navigating competitiveness and dealing with conflict management are two of the main takeaways of this experience.

## General Assembly First Committee (GA1) - Eliah Blum-Minkel & Cheng Zhu

Eliah Blum-Minkel and Cheng Zhu represented the Arab Republic of Egypt in the General Assembly First Committee (GA1). Being a part of this year's General Assembly First

Committee meant participating in a cooperative effort to draft and pass resolutions concerning the threats posed by improvised explosive devices and the reduction of nuclear danger. As with most (if not all) subject matters within the UN's realm of responsibility, matters of disarmament and international security expose the various interests and controversies that tend to stay hidden behind the veil of diplomatic decorum and civility.

The Arab Republic of Egypt has very special interests concerning the worldwide problem of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Egypt has suffered, like many other countries, a recent history of terrorist attacks utilizing IEDs to harm both state and non-state actors. What makes Egypt's situation so distinct are the 20 million cases of unexploded ordnance (UXO) left over from the second world war. These remnants of war are used to assemble IEDs, which became instruments of at least 191 attacks in the year 2019 and claimed thousands of Egyptian lives. The extraordinary link between IEDs and UXO is more or less unique to Egypt, seemingly making it impossible to integrate solutions into the agenda of the General Assembly due to the insignificance of such a single country (except for superpowers)

interest. In order to bridge a gap between views and overcome the diversity of interests in the General Assembly, I searched for issues that link Egypt's demands (for the responsible participants of WW2 to remove UXO from Egypt's territory) with the interests of as many member states as possible. Improvised explosive devices happen to be the "single largest threat" to UN peacekeeping missions and personnel, according to the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). Also, most of these UN peacekeeping missions take place in the territory of member states who lack the resources to remove IEDs and explosive remnants of war (ERW). It is, therefore, in the interest of member states facing the threat of IEDs on their territory or through the peace missions they participate in to support multilateral efforts to remove ERW and IEDs. I made an effort to convey this viewpoint to the other delegates in my speeches during formal sessions, emphasizing the need to build on already existing structures such as the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action (UNVTF). Even member states who are not directly affected by IEDs still have an interest in keeping terrorist activity in neighboring states to a minimum as well as promoting civilian

trust in institutions such as the state and markets.

This idea was eventually shaped into clauses in one of the final resolutions passed. During the overall process, I learned how important it was to look for similarities between nations to build on since the first step is the start of every walk down the path of diplomacy and cooperation. And while I always had Egypt's goals in mind, it paid off to make concessions in some policy areas since that would lead other delegates to do the same. This led to the spontaneous collaboration necessary to produce a presentable draft resolution for the committee rather than a few delegations dominating the drafting process.

One of the main lessons learned during the negotiation phases in the committee was that controversies that necessarily arise due to conflicting interests can only be transformed into consensus within the scope of mutual respect for other delegates: Obviously, both substantive agreement and respect are necessary to ensure a constructive environment to find solutions to international questions. However, during the committee meetings and informal sessions, it became clear that a minority of delegations was not

interested in finding compromises but instead sought to dominate the discussions and group efforts in order to bolster their chances of winning an award.

Such behavior generally drove a deeper divide between delegations than substantive disagreements did and added further pressure to those compromises which were already in danger of breaking up in the first place.

To advance the general interests of the Arab Republic of Egypt presented itself as being quite a challenge already, and sorting out personal disputes between delegations was not something I had prepared for in a significant way ahead of the conference. The falling out that threatened to dismantle my work as a delegate was a dispute concerning the sponsorship of the draft resolution in which I had managed to include clauses addressing fundamental Egyptian interests. Multiple delegations had written clauses in this draft resolution but had mysteriously not been credited as a sponsor of the draft resolution. This led to the respective delegations feeling manipulated, which led them to lobby against other delegations voting for the adoption of the respective draft resolution. This endangered the chances of Egypt's perspective being

featured on a final resolution since the irritated delegations represented major countries and (voting-) blocs. In order to prevent this, I and other delegates made the extraordinary effort of continually speaking to the displeased delegations (while working on our clauses in the draft resolution) in order to work out what solutions they would accept since they were no longer interested in compromise. At some point during these talks in the informal sessions, everyone involved realized that there had been some major misunderstanding concerning who had been involved in the process of leaving out some delegations from the list of sponsors. Once this was clear, these delegations loosened up to the idea of cooperation since they knew which delegates exactly were responsible and could shift the blame from all participants of the draft resolution to a select few. This switch from asymmetric information to near-perfect information resulted in much more productive negotiations and cooperation. At the end of the conference, the draft resolution passed as one of two resolutions coming out of the General Assembly First Committee, listing all of Egypt's main objectives.

In summary, the conference presented many challenges, such as the ones

mentioned above or the unforeseen absence of my co-delegate. However, the end of the conference marked the end of an invaluable experience with many lessons learned and faces remembered. The General Assembly First Committee was praised by Model United Nations staff for only passing two resolutions instead of the usual 5 to 6. Overall, all delegates in the General Assembly First Committee were congratulated for one of the "most collaborative conferences" staff had ever seen, a statement I can underpin.

## General Assembly Second Committee (GA2) - Maximilian Hüls & Simon Shaw

At NMUN 2022 in New York, Maximilian Hüls and Simon Shaw had the opportunity to represent the Arab Republic of Egypt in the General Assembly Second Committee, which deals with internationally relevant economic and financial issues. There, the topics "Biological Diversity and Its Contribution to Sustainable Development" and "Eradication of Poverty" were given.

The beginning of NMUN for us was not the flight to the conference in New York but already the intensive preparation in the run-up. In addition to the weekly events, which prepared us thematically and operationally for the conference, we were invited to the Egyptian Embassy in Berlin in advance. There we had a conversation of about 30 minutes with the ambassador Khaled Galal Abdelhamid, during which we talked about the relationship with Russia in addition to the fundamental political positions due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. He explained to us that Egypt maintains neutrality in this regard and wants to focus on the national demographic problem. Thus, Egypt is equally interested in trade with Western countries and Russia, as long as this can secure the economic system with regard to the rapidly growing population. Following this conversation, we had a 3-hour exchange with another Egyptian diplomat, ranging from Egyptian history to current positions, and were able to clarify some final questions.

In an impatient expectation to apply the collected knowledge in the operational practice of the committee work, we finally left for New York at the beginning of April.

On the first day, during the opening ceremony with thousands of highly motivated students from all over the (mainly western) world and some UN delegates, the scope of the event became clear to us. Also, the special feeling of entering the conference hall of the Hilton Hotel in a suit to talk about international politics with the other delegates is not to be underestimated. However, in the days that followed, this comfortable feeling receded into the background and was exchanged for a lot of productivity and the stress that goes with it. The work in the committee started with the opening speeches, and the first informal session was not long in coming. We used this primarily to distribute our previously prepared business cards and to enter into an exchange with the other delegates on the selection of topics. Both topics are very relevant for Egypt, as desertification and the threat to water supply by the Ethiopian dam play a significant role in biodiversity, and the Egyptian demography could become a catalyst for poverty. In the end, the theme "Biological Diversity and Its Contribution to Sustainable Development" was chosen. In the further process, we developed a resolution in cooperation with the African states, which included the topic

of desertification due to climate change. Through the Hungarian delegate, we also joined another resolution dealing with the protection of water resources. Later, both resolutions were merged, and we were able to protect our interests. Particularly important was the point we raised about securing waters that extend beyond national borders. Thus, it was accepted by the committee that a state might not interfere with the distribution of the resource if there is a disadvantage to a state sharing that resource. In addition, we were able to include the Arab Biodiversity Fund in the resolution. Together with other oil exporters in the Arab world, we stated our interest to improve our own image in the long term with investments in biodiversity that do not, however, reduce the oil demand. An example is investments in geoengineering projects. In the end, the chair accepted three resolutions, the most comprehensive of which was the resolution we initiated.

The most important part of the conference was, of course, that we were able to push our agenda and represent Egypt as best we could. We were able to learn a lot about a country that none of us had dealt with intensively before. In addition to these substantive developments, we were



also able to strengthen many soft skills during the conference.

Some of the most impactful moments for us were the speeches we were able to give on a regular basis. Our committee was one of the largest at the conference, with more than 100 attendees. While that meant we didn't get to give as many speeches as we had hoped, the ones we did give were to large audiences. Being from Witten, the experience of speaking or presenting in front of a large audience is rather rare, especially in a foreign language, so we consider this experience extremely important. An important strategic decision in the speeches was the choice between focusing on content and emotion. On the one hand, we needed to let the other delegates know what we were up to, how our working group was progressing, etc. On the other hand, if we felt that some discussions were digressing from the relevant issues, an emotional, gripping speech was the better strategy.

Speeches were not the only thing we learned from the NMUN conference, however. A larger portion of the conference, at least in terms of time, was spent writing draft resolutions and debating in the working groups. At the

beginning of the conference, we discussed with many different countries what ideas we could implement as resolutions. As the conference progressed, we realized that reaching a consensus on small details was extremely time-consuming and inefficient. Also, too many delegates were trying to take the lead, leading to confusion and inefficiency. As a result, we adopted an approach where instead of checking in advance whether everyone agreed with a particular idea for an operative clause, we focused exclusively on our preferences first, formulated specific clauses in full, and only checked at the end to see if anyone was entirely against them. This not only saved a lot of time but also proved to be an efficient strategy for implementing many resolutions that we believe represent Egypt's stance. From a purely actual perspective, this was extremely interesting to see. The supposedly less diplomatic but more strategic method of introducing resolutions at the very end made it less likely that anyone would reject the proposed clauses.

The third important finding, in addition to speeches and group work strategies, again related to the content of the discussion. We noted the apparent divide between the perceived problems of countries in the Global North

compared to those in the Global South. On the topic of biodiversity, as Egypt, we focused primarily on figuring out how to balance increased biodiversity actions with unstable economies and without harming other SDGs. However, we soon discovered that many delegates representing industrialized countries in the Global North had a very different view of what was most important. Many solutions were proposed, such as further investment in the entrepreneurial sector to foster new innovations for biodiversity action. While we thought these were good ideas, we felt that the bigger picture was often overlooked. Global bodies such as the UN, IMF, World Bank, and others often face criticism that the problems of developing countries are not given enough attention in day-to-day operations. We are glad to have experienced this firsthand.

## General Assembly Third Committee (GA3) - Anton Färniss & Anna Kühn

Anton Färniss and Anna Kühn represented the Arab Republic of Egypt in the General Assembly Third Committee (GA3). This year's topic was

"Ensuring Equitable and Inclusive Access to Education".

The Position of the Arab Republic of Egypt towards that topic was marked by a strong interest in a stabilized and improved Education System. Many Egyptian graduates lack some necessary skills for employment in a modern economy. As a result, Egypt is facing a youth employment crisis. Political instability could arise as a consequence. This is why Egypt has an open attitude towards bargaining and cooperation with other member states.

The Third General Assembly was able to pass nine Resolutions successfully. One of us worked in a group that focused on financing ideas like increasing teachers' salaries and providing better infrastructure in developing countries.

We were also involved in a group that worked on improving the quality of teaching. Luckily, we were both able to contribute one clause to the resolution and share many of their ideas with the other member states.

One of the biggest challenges was the heterogeneous demeanor of delegates. Some delegates were much more aggressive in their approaches and didn't leave much space for the rest of

the participants in a working group. Those were mainly people with a lot of experience with Model United Nations conferences. This made it sometimes hard for us not to be overlooked. But we resolved this problem by politely shifting the discussion towards our ideas and sometimes addressing honestly and directly that we would need some attention to present our ideas. We learned that it is much easier to do so if you share your concerns openly. The member states who were the most dominant apologized, and other member states agreed that they felt the same way and would also like more balance in the discussion. After that, the working environment was highly improved.

The conference also taught us a lot about international cooperation in general. Before the conference, we have often been frustrated with the impression that significant changes are made very slowly or not at all, and we caught ourselves questioning if the UN does not consider them as important.

Now we understand that international cooperation and bargaining is a process of high complexity and that the positions of different member states can be very far away from each other and that a change takes a lot of very hard

diplomatic work, and this takes time. We still find that disappointing, but now we understand why. With a certain acceptance following this lesson comes a new curiosity about the detailed, fragile, and strong sides of diplomacy.

I am truly grateful for what I, Anna Kühn, have learned from the conference and the whole stay in NYC on a personal level. I have improved my organizational skills and gained a lot of new confidence in myself. I also improved my English, and the intercultural exchange with other students from Quebec and America awakened a strong curiosity for other cultures and a high desire to travel. Before NMUN, I also enjoyed traveling, but I have always been a little afraid of doing it for an extended period of time, and when I did travel, I went to places I already knew or had a concrete idea of what to expect there. Now I have learned that I can go wherever I want, and I will find my way around. I am no longer afraid of going to places I don't know a lot about. Now the opposite is the case, and I am highly interested in them. That truly is a great new feeling, and I will never forget where I found it, which is Model United Nations.

Through lobbying, I, Anton Fürniss, joined a working group and was able to

contribute to one of the nine resolutions that were finally passed. Egypt feels a strong need to improve the quality of education, especially regarding the standard of teaching, which links to the motivation and working conditions of teachers and ensuring adequate financing from wealthier countries to improve the general infrastructure and educational standards. We were happy to link to other nations with similar goals. Egypt is going into an unemployment crisis because students do not leave school with sufficient knowledge and skills to prepare them for the job market.

Our group divided into subgroups to improve efficiency. I personally engaged with the funding team whilst my partner worked on the quality of teaching. In close cooperation with Qatar and other Arab nations sharing our interests, we developed a funding strategy informed by the results of other subgroups in our working group. One of the main challenges was ensuring equality between our group's nations. We needed to avoid some members speaking longer than their allotted share. One nation removed their signature from our paper because their clause was simply deleted. That, however, was resolved with good communication. The delegate of Qatar

and myself mediated this conflict successfully. The surprising quality, efficacy, and sophistication of the draft resolutions resulted from close and open communication. I learned to express myself along with the rules of diplomatic speech. My formal English improved, and I formed close friendships. I also learned that representing a country does not mean representing your own opinion. It is important to take personal agendas out of the discussion as much as possible. However, first and foremost, I had to become aware of my own ideas around the topics and, if necessary, suspend them until after I had completed my day's work. For instance, a nation's self-interest does not generally reflect my personal philosophy of cooperation. Yet, I had to argue for the benefit of Egypt, and Egypt alone, because that was my declared task. To further Egypt's agenda, I befriended other Arab countries' representatives and demanded that countries outside of this circle be prepared to fund our education system. In this regard, we worked strictly along with in-group and out-group systems without much concern for the well-being of the out-group nations. We worked to influence toward creating a logic for their financial responsibilities, even if my personal

opinion may have found such a strategy distasteful. On the other hand, it was rewarding to work with the standards of reciprocal altruism within our in-group nations. Furthermore, it was fascinating to investigate in more depth and sophistication the various building blocks of effective education systems, in which the investment into teaching staff is better suited to successfully influence the education of a generation than investing in individual students. Investing in the education of educators provides opportunities to many more students than investing in the education of individuals. For me, personally, the value of communication was the biggest takeaway from the MUN New York experience. Communication provides the basis for relationships, and relationships inspire cooperation. It can also motivate a caring response and a sense of mutual responsibility. On an abstract level of "nations", it does not seem possible to create the commitment to work together for change. Education was a valuable topic because its value is not in question anywhere. Even in Arab countries where until recently, the education of girls and women was taboo, the relevance and competitive advantage of an educated populace are not in dispute. An educated populace may be

dangerous to ideologues and religions. However, it is essential for the economic development of all nations wishing to compete in global markets and reap the benefits of cooperation as a mechanism to support peace.

## International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) - Esmirna Jimenez Medina & Hanne Wortmeyer

Esmirna Jimenez Medina and Hanne Wortmeyer represented the Arab Republic of Egypt in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The IAEA aims to ensure the safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy through international technical cooperation and research in the nuclear field and its sustainable development in economic, social, and environmental aspects.

By participating in this committee, we expected to be able to answer questions about the diverse fields of application of nuclear energy, the possible opportunities concerning sustainability, but also about the associated risks and the safety measures that should be adopted.



Each committee is required to prepare two predefined topics. The first topic of the IAEA dealt with the question of the possibilities that an effective application of artificial intelligence can offer in the nuclear context, both to increase efficiency and mitigate security risks. The second topic - which was primarily discussed in the committee - was dedicated to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was agreed upon in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 states (USA, China, Russia, France, UK + Germany) to control Iran's nuclear activities by imposing strict conditions to provide a nuclear security guarantee in the Middle East. With the denunciation of the JCPOA by the United States under President Donald Trump, previously imposed sanctions on Iran were resumed. In response, in 2019, the Iranian state also repudiated its commitments agreed to by the JCPOA by increasing the enrichment level of uranium, abandoning restrictions on research and development activities involving advanced centrifuges, reducing its transparency, and conducting experiments to extract uranium metal. The Iranian nuclear program met with great criticism, especially from Germany, France, and Great Britain. They believed that Iran had no civilian

need for these measures and that the production of uranium metal, in particular, was an "important step in the development of a nuclear weapon".

Considering the risk of Iran creating a nuclear weapon, the IAEA is seeking to follow up on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The focus of these measures in our simulation was, as expected, on reducing the risk of Iran establishing itself as a nuclear power and on the consequences and damage caused by the sanctions imposed on the Iranian economy and especially on the civilian population.

As the Egyptian delegation, we had a strong interest in this nuclear disarmament - partly due to our geographical proximity to Iran. At the same time, the Egyptian delegation was particularly alarmed by the humanitarian grievances of the Iranian population resulting from the sanctions. For these reasons, we focused the agreements on the economic consequences and humanitarian care in Iran. At the same time, it was important for us to consider and incorporate the interests of Iran and the United States equally in creating new guidelines. We achieved this by working with the delegations of these countries on a joint resolution. Since most

delegations agreed on the nuclear threat posed by Iran and since the JCPOA had already provided efficient solutions to address this threat in advance, a common consensus was reached relatively quickly during the negotiations. A total of six working papers were negotiated, all of which were adopted as resolutions in committee.

Looking back, we especially improved our communicative skills in English through new vocabulary and better fluency. We also learned the importance of jumping over our shadows to have more fun through more active participation. At the same time, especially in our committee - which is subordinate to other committees such as the Security Council and the General Assembly - we were able to experience that the balance of power in the UN body itself is divided differently. As a result, we often could not provide concrete proposals for solutions in the form of instructions but were only allowed to "appeal" or "draw attention to something". The same manifested in the sovereignty of states, which one was not allowed to violate. Thus, the challenge often arose to find the degree between a constructive proposal for a solution and the restrictions that one

was often unaware of but which were legitimate.

In conclusion, our goal was fulfilled to get to know the construct of the United Nations and to experience it authentically. We also had a lot of fun in an informal context by creating new friendships and getting to know new cultures. We especially remembered that the United Nations does very important and difficult work, but that we also assumed this organization has more power than it ultimately does.

## International Organization for Migration (IOM) - Louisa Hassel & Annabel Helen Runge

Louisa Hassel and Annabel Helen Runge represented the Arab Republic of Egypt in the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The issues we addressed in our committee were "securing preventative Healthcare for migrant workers" and "racial discrimination". I held back in the first committee meetings, not daring to step forward like the others were doing and setting the tone. As a "MUN-first-timer", I had to find my way between the many so experienced and so competent-

appearing, self-confident people around me. But with time, I got in. I felt more comfortable saying more, interjecting ideas and arguments, writing my own sentences in the working papers, or including the important concerns to us as the delegation of Egypt. We even formulated one sentence ourselves as it is, and that's exactly how it stayed in the final working paper, which was a really good feeling. A certain daily routine was then established. During breaks, we bought a coffee at Starbucks or Prêt à manger to enjoy in Central Park, and that caffeine we certainly needed. Once, we had conferences from eight in the morning until half-past ten in the evening. That was quite exhausting, of course, and in the end, we were tired but very content with the work we had done.

What we practiced there was democracy in action. Long, intense debates, a lot of thinking, and a lot of research to work out the best ideas. Every decision for or against something was made by vote. This became second nature to us. When we gave our own speeches, the adrenaline shot through our veins. But the best thing about the overall conference was the collaboration with Louisa, my partner, with whom I prepared long and intensively for this special project in

advance. In addition, working so closely with many different people, strangers at first, became friendships we still maintain today. One delegate, who represented Vietnam, was himself from Egypt, and we were able to compare our research results about Egypt with the knowledge of a real Egyptian. By the way, we didn't just exchange ideas exclusively about politics. We also told each other a lot about our initial country, culture, and people. The competencies we developed, learning to stand up for our ideas and convictions, assert ourselves with arguments and learn diplomatic discussions, I will also benefit from in the future. But for me, besides the learning experience, and network expansion, it was a personal experience of growth and a broadening of horizons.

Louisa and I have resolved: We will also participate in the next MUN. We will come together again to discuss, argue and formulate in committee, then perhaps in New York again or in Brussels (MEP) or wherever it takes us.

## Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) - Caio Passos Newman & Tim Rauschenberg

Caio Passos Newman and Tim Rauschenberg represented the Arab Republic of Egypt in the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). The PBC is the second major UN commission, alongside the Security Council, that deals with security issues, foreign policy, and maintaining and securing peace in conflict zones across the globe. Two topics were brought before the PBC: The role of regional integration in establishing peace and the funding for peacebuilding activities through tighter bonds with the UN Peacebuilding Fund. Both topics were discussed, even though the latter only briefly and without resulting in any resolution.

The conference was an exciting new experience for us, and the security policy issues we dealt with were particularly fascinating. Thanks to our preparatory research and, not least, our already personally developed interest in global politics and conflicts, we were well prepared for the discussions with the other delegations. These were mostly from various US universities, but

there were also some other participants from Germany, France, and other European countries. Due to the international and diverse orientation of Witten/Herdecke University, especially of the PPE study program, and our own personal multinational background, experiencing multilingual communication and cooperation on a global stage was particularly important for both our university as well as for our own personal and professional development. For this reason, approaching other delegations came naturally, facilitating the open and productive exchange that is essential to the NMUN project.

During the first day of the conference, the positions of the individual national delegations were presented in various opening speeches. Small groupings were quickly formed due to the existence of common economic and, above all, geopolitical interests. As several African countries and various geopolitical "big players" such as China, Russia, the USA, France, and Germany were represented at our conference, a working group with a special focus on Africa soon emerged, in which Egypt, as a link between North Africa and the Middle East, was naturally heavily involved. Interestingly, thanks to some well-chosen and catchy formulations,

we were able to shape the linguistic discourse strongly. For example, we established the catchphrase "African solutions for African problems", which surprisingly was consistently taken up by the other delegates. This wording helped us not only to frame the discourse in our sense but also to emphasize Egypt's self-perception as an autonomous and independent country that drew the lesson from its colonial past to prevent too much dependence on the major world powers and polarized geopolitical blocks, and to defend its own position as a stable political system in between neighboring countries of traditional civil conflict.

Not only all African countries but also the other delegations quickly agreed that the African continent needed joint support for peacebuilding missions and development assistance to avoid conflict creation in these regions, but that this must not be achieved at the cost of too much dependence on major economic powers. With Egypt's heavy involvement within the African Union's security sphere and as a stable partner in the MENA (Middle East North Africa) region, we tried sharing our expertise in peacebuilding policies to make a transition towards increased security 'policy space' more plausible. Furthermore, with a history as a non-

aligned member state and its advocacy of increased national autonomy within the region, we ensured that as a delegation, we took an active stance in all position papers intending to prevent more powerful member states from overlooking the importance of this point.

The conference sessions resulted not only in the drafting of a resolution on peacebuilding with a focus on the African continent - especially on cooperation between international and African organizations such as the African Union in the context of peace missions, as well as in the promotion of foreign investment in the continent - but also in another resolution, which was drafted in close cooperation with the delegations of Germany, France, Russia, and China and included a more global perspective on the topic. As a delegation, we were able to contribute to the content of both resolutions and make good proposals at various points, which correspond to Egypt's positions and could contribute to the stabilization of neighboring conflict regions. Egypt's main aim for this conference was a combination of increasing the efficiency of existing finance and security structures, as well as renovating the preconceptions held within the UN towards conflict management.



The conference allowed us to openly engage with global issues and put ourselves in the shoes of other countries in defense of their interests and ideals. It should be mentioned that although at the beginning of the conference, Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine was already underway, at least in our commission, there was silent consensus to disregard the elephant in the room, as this had led to tension and hostility, especially in commissions with a Russian and a Ukrainian delegation - in our case, there was only a Russian one. This may not have been in the spirit of a realistic simulation conference, but it seemed to us that there was a great danger of impiously treating such an emotionally charged and rapidly evolving topic by making claims based on half-knowledge.

Despite it being a simulation, all participants took their roles seriously, at times not in the interest of the ultimate goal of peaceful and sustainable solutions. Competitiveness within the committee sometimes threatened the NMUN conference's real point. Thankfully, by remaining calm and keeping diplomatic behavior at the highest priority, the Egyptian delegation was able to circumvent and suppress the negative impact that some of the

competitive behavior of other delegates had instigated. Overall, the simulation was a successful international learning experience that has granted us unique insights into the inner workings of diplomatic processes within the United Nations.

## United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) - Johann Eickenbrock & David Weiß

Johann Eickenbrock and David Weiß had the honor and privilege to represent The Arab Republic of Egypt in the United Nations Environmental Assembly during the NMUN 2022 in New York.

The UN Environment Assembly is one of the more prominent committees meaning that delegates represent 50 Member States. This size meant that finding consensus was even more difficult as all perspectives and objectives had to be considered, from the colonial past to unilateral thinking in the present. Each committee had to submit a "Position Paper" in advance to present its position on two topics and to present initial approaches to solutions. We are incredibly proud that we were honored with the "Best Position Paper Award" for the elaboration of our

extensive and detailed research, well articulation, and innovative ideas.

In the UNEA, we talked about the following topics:

- Dramatically Reducing Maritime Pollution, including Plastic
- Implementing a Circular Economy for the Sustainable Development Goals

In the first session, we voted on the order of the topics discussed as there usually is only capacity for one of the topics at the conference. We decided to vote for the first topic as we saw the importance of maritime pollution as a more pressing challenge that needed global collective action as fast as possible. Further, Egypt heavily relies on tourism and suffers a lot of marine pollution itself. Thus, we started to persuade the other Member States to vote along with us in favor of topic one. Fortunately, our promotion efforts on topic one were successful, and the agenda was set in the order of topic one and then topic two.

Nevertheless, topic two was essential to discuss, and we had the chance to start working on topic two on the last day of the conference. Overall, we chose to represent Egypt in the UN Environment Assembly as the climate and

biodiversity crisis are the most significant challenges humanity has ever faced. It is an excellent example of a problem that humanity faces as a whole. No one can escape the climate crisis, and it hits us everywhere and in all areas of life regardless of origin, status, wealth, or power. Only together can we tackle the climate crisis and achieve the Paris Climate Accords signed by 194 countries. The Member States must put their unilateral thinking aside and act more multilaterally. State leaders must eclipse economic interests to save ourselves and our exceptional planet earth.

Next, we began forming groups to draft working papers. On the one side, we found partners in China, Russia, North Korea, Belarus, and Iran, and on the other side in Sweden, Ukraine, Belgium, Philippines, Côte d'Ivoire, and Peru. We were aware that these Member States had very different interests. However, we saw the spirit of the UN and, therefore, the UNEA as a room to set aside unilateral thinking and work on global challenges together. Thus, we worked as mediators between the different fronts and promoted collective action. Through lively discussions and clear communication, we were able to work efficiently on finding solutions to the challenges

mentioned above regardless of national interests. We did this, among other things, by giving speeches in which we clearly communicated the process of the working groups we were associated with and laying out common ground for possible cooperation between the Member States. This made it clear to us that international exchange is essential to solving most of the most significant challenges of the 21st century.

In our position paper, we demanded introducing a value-added tax on single-use plastic to reduce the consumption of plastic products and thereby reduce plastic pollution. With solid commitment, we, among other things, contributed this tax to the resolution paper along with two other operative clauses. These operative clauses included actions on reducing subsidies on fossil fuels and reporting on the efforts of the UNEA to take all relevant stakeholders along the process and ensure a standardized approach.

During the conference, we faced several challenges, such as finding the other Member States with similar approaches to solutions and cooperating with them or bringing the different ideas together. The biggest challenge by far was to specify our possible solutions, like who would

finance proposed programs and who has the responsibility and mandate to implement them and phrase them so that everyone benefits from them. We had to find compromises to reach a consensus with all Member States to overcome these challenges.

The fact that people have approached each other openly in the committee was crucial to the whole debate and thus to finding appropriate solutions to problems. While talking to each other, we often realized that many fundamental views on the topics were not that different from each other but somewhat closer than they seemed at first sight. Primarily going into an open dialogue with various parties was the key to overcoming all challenges and led to cooperating with countries that appeared to be completely different in their interests.

Through this experience, we saw that it is possible to work together on global challenges regardless of the many differences between the Member States.

Therefore, in many ways, cultural sensitivity was required during the conference. Not only because the international conference brought together many different cultures and ethnicities from around the world but

also because these people all represented a UN Member State that wasn't their homeland. In addition, the interaction between some Member States was sometimes tense because of the Ukraine war.

Besides that, sometimes, it was challenging to evaluate the different perspectives every Member State and individual has. To differentiate this and stay in your role as a diplomatic representative of The Arab Republic of Egypt was not always an easy undertaking. But here, too, was a question of clear communication to overcome these hurdles. On a personal level, we learned to present our ideas and proposals precisely and in a short time, mainly by giving speeches and doing public speaking during the group work.

Through this experience, we have learned valuable lessons that will accompany us in our lives. As the delegates at the conference came from numerous countries around the globe, the perspectives and insights they shared with us were highly diverse. Putting oneself in the other person's shoes helped us better understand the other's point of view and was thus essential for solution-oriented debates. We learned that this diversity of

perspectives results in better and more holistic solutions to problems. Further, this insight goes hand in hand with the fact that our sensibility for other cultures significantly strengthened, which helped us work efficiently in teams with diverse backgrounds. Finally, we can say that we came home with a better understanding of how the world works, what challenges lie ahead of us, and especially about the people living on our precious planet.

## United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) - Arthur Küpper & Amir Rahimi

Arthur Küpper and Amir Rahimi represented the Arab Republic of Egypt in the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). UN-Habitat is part of the United Nations Development Department and aims to promote socially and ecologically sustainable urbanization. This year, the committee discussed the topics "Sustainable Transportation for Better Air Quality in Urban Areas" and "Mitigating the Spread of Diseases in Urban Areas during Health Crises". Since the first issue is closely tied to climate change, a most pressing topic for most member states, our committee

voted in favor of discussing it first, with only a few votes against the decision.

Ninety-one percent of the world's population resides in areas where air pollution surpasses the World Health Organization's (WHO) guideline limits, resulting in over seven million deaths yearly, according to WHO. Against the background of the Greater Cairo Area (GCA) being the largest urban area in Africa, air pollution is a significant challenge for Egypt. Therefore, we also decided in favor of discussing topic one first. Our key postulation was the need to develop sustainable transportation to reduce air pollution domestically and internationally. The establishment of Bus Rapid Transit Systems (BRT) with the aid of the UN was of great importance. We also advocated for a division between pedestrian, bike, and car traffic to ensure efficiency and increased safety for all parties involved.

Nevertheless, with ecologically-friendly transportation methods still being far from affordable to everyone, we still saw the need to improve current fuel production methods toward ecological goals. We also suggested working on global funding to support developing countries in implementing sustainable transportation systems and creating publicly available data banks to share

knowledge through government agencies worldwide. In our line of argument, we particularly focused on the availability of countries of the global south.

With the generally high consensus on the issue's importance, our committee passed four resolutions, with Egypt being a sponsor of two and a signatory of one of them, managing to implement many of our ideas and passing friendly amendments in cooperation with the respective working groups. Due to the close positions, one of the biggest challenges for our committee was the similarity of the working papers. In the attempt to include as many nations' ideas and worries as possible in the process, our committee worked hard on merging seven working papers into broader overarching ones. The merging process turned out to be long and exhausting. It could not have been done without the endurance and patience of more experienced and the openness to compromise of first-time representatives. In the end, we merged three papers into one and included more than half of the committee. With the closely aligned positions of most member states, the wording and importance of specific ideas were the main focus of these discussions.

One of the requirements was to win over as many of our member states as possible to our ideas and later to our proposed resolutions. Often, only single points or sentences kept our colleagues from joining our coalition. The more states worked on a working paper, the more difficult it was to find a wording everyone agreed on. Therefore, sensitivity was always required in the formulation. To gain support for a specific clause or idea, it was always best to approach delegates individually, to immediately sort out confusion or open questions.

Although many other states shared core points of our agenda, sometimes there were completely incompatible approaches. Aware of the challenges to investing in sustainable transportation systems for developing countries, we tried to find a compromise to collect funding for sustainable projects. However, we quickly recognized that industrialized countries had different interests. Although we were delighted that we had agreed with many countries on appropriate measures to minimize air pollution, we could not answer the question of how these measures should be financed in economically weak countries. While we were not entirely surprised by this, we had hoped that with the common goal of clean air,

industrialized countries would also be willing to support economically weak countries in implementing them.

Due to the lack of time, we only briefly managed to discuss the second topic, "Mitigating the Spread of Diseases in Urban Areas during Health Crises". This was very unfortunate, especially against the background that Egypt acted swiftly in the current coronavirus pandemic. Egypt stressed the importance of recognizing the ongoing risk of sudden health crises. The Egyptian government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with a comprehensive package to address the health emergency and provide adequate housing to the public. This allowed the government to avoid a complete shutdown and even ensure a positive GDP rate in 2020. Egypt not only worked closely with UN-Habitat and the World Health Organization to tackle the health emergency but also took a decisive role in supporting other states, offering much expertise from their own decisions.

Participating in NMUN was a great experience regarding our speaking capabilities. After some hesitation, we could present our ideas with speeches in front of the plenary and submit our proposals. The lively exchange in



English presented us with a challenge but also a chance. Because most of our fellow delegates were native English speakers, the bar was set very high. Nevertheless, the multilateral exchange was always characterized by mutual respect and cooperativeness. Even delegates with opposing views were always open to discussion and respectful. Not only are we grateful for the chance to participate at the MUN conference itself, but also for the acquaintances that were strengthened outside the meetings and, in some cases, continue to this day. We are still in contact with some of our fellow delegates and plan to meet them if they come to visit the EU in the summer.

The tedious work of international relations and cooperation was fascinating to see firsthand. Understanding the economic, political, and cultural differences and attempting to find solutions for them required extreme endurance. Nevertheless, finding oral agreements is not enough in such a setting. Getting these ideas on a paper with a wording suitable for every delegate partaking is even more difficult. This challenge resulted in an understanding of the necessity for the slow seeming, ineffective, bureaucratic processes of international relations and the UN especially. Additionally, it

became clear that the UN's purpose is to create an environment for contact and exchange to foster peaceful and democratic solutions, not as a super governmental body enforcing its ideals.

## Call for action

During the conference, we faced different challenges, which not only occur in the United Nations and other multinational organizations but also in the daily life and business world. The most apparent burden we had to overcome is related to intercultural communication, which is common in an increasingly globalized and digitalized world. So, managing the differences between distinct cultural norms and behavior in communication is a necessity in a world full of conflicts such as but not limited to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, rising tensions between the western and eastern world, disparities between the global south and north, and the global climate crisis, which affects everyone and everything in the world.

For interacting with other representatives of Member States and working with them to pass a resolution, we identified several behavior patterns

that can help foster an equal and constructive communication process.

First, it might be essential to have repetitive meetings. Still, it can help accelerate the process of bringing solutions to light in a collaborative manner and stress that there is an interest in working together to find the best possible compromise. But meeting regularly and exchanging divergent perspectives also has the benefit of developing a habit of cooperating, which in turn fosters trust-building as well as mutual respect. Reaching a consensus and finding a compromise – are the keywords for international cooperation and developing solutions for the urgent topics of our world and in every daily context. The process of reaching a compromise, which all parties benefit from equally, pre requires some basic soft skills:

## I. Be open and tolerant

openness and tolerance are of utmost importance for accepting each other and respecting the opposing parties' ideas in a world with many different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. There is no room for discrimination and racism, which excludes the people themselves and their ideas and solution approaches.

## II. Take time and listen to each other

We live in a constantly and rapidly changing world. Decisions are sometimes made hastily and under immense time pressure, without considering possible consequences. Even if time restrictions limit us, which could lead to disadvantageous outcomes for some parties involved, we should nevertheless take the appropriate time to listen to the ideas and needs of each involved party to show respect. It will surely help to foster the best compromise possible.

## III. Consider the other perspectives

Understanding other perspectives is a necessary precondition to identifying the underlying conditions which make the process of developing a solution possible in the first place. Furthermore, it is constructive to identify where possible conflicts could occur and what workarounds to these rising tensions might look like. Preliminaries are necessary to overcome existing prejudices and thus create an atmosphere that makes problem-solving possible.

## IV. Meet on the same level

Meeting on the same level combines all three previous aspects. The importance of meeting on the same level consists of avoiding a top-down communication approach. To be able to reach a consensus on a subject, it is inevitable to communicate constructively so that all parties involved feel taken seriously and valued. In essence, meeting on the same level is about respecting and tolerating each other. Therefore, it is necessary to talk to each other at eye level and avoid a feeling of moral superiority prior to any negotiation process.

## V. Master self-reflection

Self-reflection can be seen as a process one should do regularly for every situation. Doing so affects every decision we make and how we evaluate them afterward, as it lets us reflect critically on the implications of our actions and whether something might have been correct or incorrect. On the other hand, reflecting on one's own feelings could offer hints to the other side's feelings and thus help steer the process in a favorable direction. In such a way, self-reflection can be the key to finding a fair compromise. At least, it helps us evaluate our own situation and behavior, which is vital for humanely comparing us.

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