From the 26th to the 30th of August 2015, Rotaractors from more than 25 countries and from every continent of the world, met in Belgrade, Serbia for the third edition of the International Youth Conference: Rotaract Global Model United Nations, hosted by the Rotaract Club of Beograd.

During this educational simulation of the United Nations, which was a truly global conference and a perfect example of the close cooperation between Rotary and the United Nations, students representing countries discussed crucial problems that concern the international community, issues that have been raised by the UN and Rotary International as well. The delegates realized the responsibility upon them and voted impressive resolutions with innovative solutions, hoping that their voices will be heard and their suggestions will reach the desks of the actual United Nations in New York.

This particular Conference is organized in a different country every year, by a different Rotaract Club. The previous two editions were hosted by Romania and the United Kingdom respectively. This year, after three days of intense debate, the delegates of the Committees: Security Council, Human Rights Council, Economic and Social Council and the Legal Committee came up with impressive results and presented simple and realistic solutions that have never been heard before and can actually make a difference.

Two were the most significant conclusions that were made by the end of the conference.

A. *Young minds working together CAN make a difference.* There were young Rotaractors literally from all over the world that let go of their differences and tried to cooperate to resolve some of the most complicated issues that concern the international community. And the results were at least impressive.

B. *Rotary and Rotaract working with the United Nations CAN make a difference.* This was proven in a truly global conference, a United Nations simulation organized by Rotaract. All delegates were from different countries, different backgrounds and different cultures. But they all shared the same love and respect for the Rotary institution and they were all determined to make a difference in this
world. They were determined to find the points which they agree upon rather than the ones which they disagree upon. All of them, experienced or not, were determined to be a gift in the world. During and after the conference. And their impressive, simple and realistic solutions, the ones they put so much effort, hope and consideration on, SHOULD be heard. They are a gift to the world.

Feedback from the sessions

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

After a thorough discussion between the Chairs of the Human Rights Council (Evina Karamanli, Marija Markovic) and the Secretary General of the Conference (Danai Beka), the Agenda of the Committee included two very interesting topics that became the source of thinking intense and debate during the conference.

A. The international refugee crisis: the rights of refugees and asylum seeking people.

The delegates started by stating that the biggest crisis of our days is not a financial one. It is the refugee crisis all over the world and especially in Europe. The debate was heated, the suggestions were a lot and controversial and the participants
soon presented and voted in favor of an impressive resolution with pioneer solutions that addressed not only the rights of refugees but also the extended difficulties that the host countries face. The final document incorporated both short-term and long-term suggestions, simple and realistic that could hopefully put an end to this crisis and to the suffering of refugees while supporting the host countries that lack infrastructure to accept the extended waves of people that pass through their borders. The delegates felt the responsibility on their hands, not only because they knew that their suggestions might reach the actual United Nations, but also because they saw the problem with their own eyes. Members of the Rotaract Club of Beograd suggested that the delegates of the Human Rights Council could visit areas of Belgrade where refugees are situated. The participants soon realized that the refugee crisis is everywhere; it is part of our lives. It is real. After that, the delegates refused to take a break between the sessions until they could come up with effective solutions to this issue!

**B. The right to privacy in the digital age**

The second topic of the Human Rights Council was very different from the previous one. In the contemporary digital age, the capacity of governments, organizations and even individuals to be in complete control of monitoring, data collection and, inevitably, interception has been enhanced by communication technologies, whose vulnerability has caused deep concern regarding human rights violations. This was the first remark during the sessions. The delegates got to understand deeply what constitutes a privacy violation, the measures that need to be adopted in order to ascertain the protection of the relevant human rights (focusing on data protection) and discussed extensively the remaining challenges and opportunities for action. Moreover they debated upon existing legislation and resolutions and potential amendments where needed. By the end of the conference, the delegates of the Human Rights Council presented a second, all-inclusive resolution for which the Chairs of the committee were simply proud of.
SECURITY COUNCIL

Now that was an impressive committee from the very beginning. All delegates of the Council were very experienced and knew the policy of the country they represented better than their own names. They visited embassies before the conference, they did extended research and they felt the importance of being a representative in the only organ of the United Nations whose decisions can be enforced immediately.

The Topic area of this year’s sessions was *Religious extremism spread by ISIS as a threat to international peace and security*. The President of the Council (our experienced *Suhaas Savio Ema* with more than 30 MUN conferences in his cv, who also presented last year’s resolution at the UN), along with his Vice-President (*Christopher Zafeiris*), helped with this controversial topic while the delegates were discussing effective ways to address this conflict and the threats it presents to international peace and security as well as the human rights violations that take place as a result of it (the right to religion and its impairment). They also discussed extensively how the ideal conditions that help ISIS thrive can be eliminated and measures that the Security Council can adopt in case the situation gets out of hand. The main realization that took place during the sessions was that the issue lies in the ideology and in peoples’ minds and it cannot be solved by a simple intervention or by taking down a representative of ISIS. After this realization the delegates simply examined the ideology of the people and tried to address the issue from “inside”, a tactic that has never been used before.

Besides this interesting and controversial topic, the delegates of the UNSC dealt amazingly with a surprise-crisis that was brought during the session by the Crisis Committee (*Chair: Jovan Shopovski*). The representatives dealt with everything with a great deal of maturity, beyond personal beliefs and opinions, and literally took on the problem like real world delegates. They did not get caught up with their own personal agendas but rather sought a solution for a greater cause when adopting a resolution that aimed to tackle the issue in a simple and effective way, as well as solving the crisis that occurred. It was a real United Nations Security Council in all its glory.
The topics of the Economic and Social Council in this year’s conference focused on issues that have been addressed not only by the United Nations but by Rotary International as well. The Chair (Natalia Hermida, an actual diplomat in Lebanon) and Co-Chair (Elisavet Dravalou) decided the Agenda with the Secretary General (Danai Beka) while bearing in mind the character of the Committee and their role in Rotary and the UN too. The final Agenda was consisted of:

A. *The Economic and Social Impact of Ebola on the affected countries and solutions for an efficient and multi-sectoral response.*

This Topic area was pioneer since it did not aim at addressing the immediate effects of the virus but rather deal with the long-term economic and social consequences. The delegates began the sessions with the understanding that the Ebola outbreak affected and almost tore down social ties and cohesion in the three most affected countries and that people’s fear of getting infected had caused suspicion and isolation. Schools closed and tourism and commerce were dramatically affected in a negative way because of the epidemic. The delegates then did a fantastic job by discussing every dimension of the issue at hand, by addressing the long-term effects and by proposing solutions that could eliminate the problem, paying special attention to certain vulnerable groups. The resolution that was drafted was an all-inclusive document with simple and effective solutions, worthy of the Economic and Social Council and of what the Committee represents.

B. *Securing and Attaining Sustainable Water Management.*

As Ban Ki Moon once said, “Safe drinking water and adequate sanitation are crucial for poverty reduction, crucial for sustainable development and crucial for achieving any and every one of the Millennium Development Goals”. This particular phrase was repeated many times during the sessions while the delegates realized the significance of the topic they were asked to resolve. The representatives addressed it while respecting every country’s policy and position and while taking into consideration the adopted resolutions and relevant UN bodies and actions. The outcome of the heated debate was a resolution that incorporated all of the above while at the same time suggesting new measures and solutions in order to secure and attain sustainable water management.
LEGAL COMMITTEE

This particular committee was a small jewel; a room consisted of professionals, leaded by two extraordinary and hardworking Chairs (Joshika Saraf and Sonia Saranti). Rotaractors from around the world discussed the topics:

A. Measures to combat international terrorism.
Within the context of the legal committee the notion of combating terrorism was examined from its purely legal perspective. It addressed the issue as it stands from its problematic definition to notions such as ‘proportionality’. The existing international instruments were taken into consideration during the entire procedure and the delegates worked incredibly hard on drafting what was, by the end of the conference, the most impressive resolution we had seen, a true piece of art that no one could believe it was not a product of the actual Legal Committee of the United Nations. Issues such as targeted killing, assassination of terrorist in legislation, state responsibility, ‘war on terror’ and derogations from the international law of human rights and international humanitarian law were only some of the issues that were discussed before the representatives drafted this impressive document that we will be proud to present. The delegates presented extraordinary interest in this topic. Most importantly, they came across solutions that were pioneer compared to the ones that have been voted upon for the same topic. They were passionate, very well informed on the topic and they tried to contribute at the best of their capacity both during the committee sessions and while drafting their resolution, hoping that the solutions and their voices will be heard and make a difference.

B. Criminal accountability of UN officials and experts on mission.
This second topic was also a rather hard and controversial one that required extended research on behalf of the delegates. It was a very demanding and technical issue which required special knowledge and much preparation. This legal committee however utterly stood to the occasion. The deep research the delegates made was more than obvious even before the sessions, when the delegates sent their position papers. This could not but be reflected to the sessions too, where the debate on the topic was valid and to the point every single second. The Chairs were impressed by the quality of the proposals that were incorporated into the final resolutions and the Secretary General along with the Organizing Committee could not but admit that this particular Council was consisted of pure ambassadors who took their role seriously and presented us with at least impressive suggestions.
“I have participated in more than 20 Model United Nations Conferences around the world and I have never seen anything like that. Every single delegate in every committee, whether a first-timer or an experienced one, impressed us beyond words by working hard every step of the way. Guided by the experienced Secretariat and the incredibly hardworking Chairs from around the world, they presented suggestions and resolutions that have never been heard before, simple and effective, which could actually make a difference. They had an amazing time, they got to understand different cultures from around the world and they got to realize that our similarities are more than our differences. We are now asking you to give us a chance to present their effort and pioneer thinking to the world. We ask you to give us some time to show the work we have been putting into this huge global project where Rotary and the United Nations became ONE. We ask you to help us all Rotaractors present our solutions to crucial issues that concern the international community and make a difference.

Let us be a gift to the world.”

With Rotaract regards,

Danai Beka
Secretary General

Rotaract Global Model United Nations 2015