AFRICAN UNION RECONSIDERS ITS GOVERNING STRUCTURE

By Gretchen Colvert

Students serving as delegates from the African Union met together Friday afternoon to discuss their foremost concerns as a committee within the United Nations. Of the topics brought to the table, the matter of permanent membership on the Security Council piqued the most interest and debate.

Perhaps this was such a hot topic because of the speckled political and economic makeup of the African representation. The delegates for Algeria, Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Togo were present.

Across the board, they all seemed to understand the importance of agreeing on a set of criteria by which the AU would elect countries to serve on the Security Council.

But then the question of rotation arose. At the onset of the meeting, it was clear that some compromises would have to be made. Yet, as Chair Melissa Tuttle (U of A) remarked during a brief caucus, “everyone is well-prepared and is being respectful of [the other delegates]”. One very extroverted delegate, Nicole Wright (Pulaski Academy) for Sierra Leone, began the

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MICJ CONSIDERS SPAIN’S SOVEREIGNTY IN GIBRALTAR

By Joshua Bugeja

The first session of the MICJ opened with Case #1, concerning the United Kingdom and Spain’s sovereignty over Gibraltar. This year the Coordinator of the MICJ is Kent Miller and the Co-Coordinator is Chris Serven, both of the University of Arkansas Fayetteville.

The Applicant for the issue was Megan Matty from the University of Arkansas Fayetteville, representing Spain in this conflict. Her opponent, Tammy Lippert, also from the University of Arkansas Fayetteville, represented the United Kingdom.

The session opened with the history of this conflict and the claims that each country has made regarding the issue. As the Applicant in this dispute, Spain opened debate. Shortly afterwards, the United

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There were two issues of major concern during Social Humanitarian and Cultural Committee’s (SOCHUM) session in the 40th Annual Arkansas Model United Nations Conference on Friday, November 18. Delegated nations grappled with topics ranging from “Prisons and Human Rights” because the topics were so broad, two sub-committees were formed: one Pro-Intervention of the UN and another for Non-Intervention.

Delegate Lynsey Moli-naro, representative of Benin, feels that the division of the groups was necessary and that they were “making progress with the issues,” but she and the United Kingdom’s representative, Allison Erkman, both agreed that nothing could really be achieved without more discussion or “more ideas brought up between the two groups.” This compromise seemed unlikely because in some instances there were actual splits within the sub-committees.

One such controversial topic was addressing which problem to tackle first. Melissa Allen, a delegate for Algeria, felt that the UN should be much more involved in ensuring that “the standard rules defining prison abuses be raised” because of the rampant number of crimes committed within her country’s prison system.

However, delegate Amanda Yates stated on behalf of Thailand, “We

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Kingdom argued the issue and presented counter-arguments.

Of note, the representative of Spain presented their history with the country and the need for Gibraltar to rejoin them after removing the Treaty of Utrecht. To counter this claim, the representative of the United Kingdom provided an extensive background to illustrate the scope of this debate, including the five treaties that form a background for their claims, and the United Kingdom’s present position regarding this conflict.

A large portion of the evidence presented by the representative of the United Kingdom reaffirms their position by citing election polls, relations with Gibraltar, and additional treaties that have reaffirmed their claim.

On the other hand, Spain argued the cultural relationship between the people of Gibraltar and the United Kingdom wasn’t as established as the link Spain shared.

Spain reiterated that the Treaty of Utrecht, if removed, would allow Gibraltar to have full self-determination, regardless of the other treaties the United Kingdom cited as a link.

Both the Respondent and Applicant entertained questions regarding the topic for forty five minutes.

Coordinator of the MICJ, Kent Miller, had this to say about the first session, “I’m very impressed so far with the professionalism displayed by the delegates and judges.

I’m also very proud of the debaters and the well-thought questions they asked. I believe that everyone in this session is working really well together and I think we’re off to a great start of this conference.”

Miller went on to say that he couldn’t “wait until the other two cases are brought up for debate in the MICJ because they’re both powerful conflicts with strong emotions on both sides.”

At press time, the verdict was headed for a decision for the United Kingdom, though the Treaty of Utrecht was being dissolved. The next two cases to be debated are the Syria vs Israel and Pakistan vs India, respectively. The Syria vs Israel debate was slated to occur late Friday night while the Pakistan vs India debate will be held Saturday morning. An issue of heated debate, Case #2 concerns Golan Heights while Case #3 revolves around Kashmir.
Some of these nations are currently considered not only governments "in transition", but also economies "in transition". There began much confusing about what a "stable" nation exemplified.

While some delegates argued that it may be more effective to give the SC seats only to countries that are currently receiving little foreign aid, Tera Whitz (Russellville) maintained that some less "stable" nations, such as her own Togo, may actually benefit a great deal from having the chance to serve in a rotated position.

Many nodded at this comment, but some of the delegates still hesitated and began writing their rough drafts in order to clarify their viewpoints for discussion.

Towards the end of the session, the delegates had separated themselves into two opinions about rotation. There were two rough drafts of resolutions presented, one given by the delegate for Sierra Leone, the other by Sean Cornell (Russellville) for Madagascar.

In the former, Ms. Wright returned to her geographical division of nations, supporting that equality would be served to all African nations if the rotation were guaranteed to be unbiased, as in the rotation of the General Assembly seats.

Whereas in the latter draft, Mr. Cornell heeded the Council to make one seat shared between South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt, with the other seat rotated amongst the remaining AU nations.

While each had a valid and persuasive speech, when the matter was put to a vote, the second option was favored and it passed with one abstention.
feel that we should start by first defining what abuse is." Thailand and several other developing nations including Panama, Afghanistan, and Iraq also felt that standards should be flexible.

"We believe that you should define abuse as what goes on in prisons, which does not normally occur within a country," commented Yates. She went on to state that the standards should not only reflect the values of a few nations and concluded, "In America, abuse can be defined as hitting a wife or a child. It can also be verbal. In Thailand, however, these things are not considered abuse. This is why we should remain flexible."

Another huge division on resolutions essentially came down to the Third World Countries' views versus the more developed nations'. Delegate Ariel Hayes for the Republic of Liberia said, "The problem is getting money for Third World Countries from [richer nations] and being able to maintain our rights. For example, we don't want some country like Ireland imposing on Africa."

"Other countries were also fearful of this sort of corruption. Dana Norwood, a representative for Iran, and Zack Long, one of the representatives of Vietnam, provided similar perspectives. Norwood said, 'We need to protect every country's sovereignty, not just some people's.' Long added, 'We want to tackle problems per nation. Vietnam is for non-intervention with nations' sovereignty because the alternative would be too costly and unethical.'"

When Afghanistan representative, Christopher Belt, stated that the US has played a "huge role in prison abuses, especially in the Middle East," Marissa Tedford on behalf of the US stated that she was "unaware" of any misdoings. The US could not escape the spotlight. Several countries mentioned the US's importance because it is such a huge financial contributor to the UN and wondered about the country's intentions.

However, another representative of the US, Carlie Ruhlman, said, "We are open to any suggestions from any of the delegations. We are also willing to help." Surprisingly, the US was in talks with the minor coalition formed by Thailand, Afghanistan, and a few other developing nations. The group was trying to survey other countries' ideas on other issues that should be discussed.

Long provided an interesting perspective on how prison systems could be improved globally: "Governments should not be allowed to inspect their own prison systems. The UN would approve special committees to do so, and money for these committees would come from NGOs (National Government Organizations) to eliminate bias." He added that countries would be reprimanded if they were seen as being too negligent or inhumane in their treatment of POWs. He also stated that some countries would volunteer to have their jails inspected because "economic cookies would be distributed." These cookies would be monetary rewards supplied to maintain prison systems based on the quality of their effort to do so as well as their financial need. Poor countries such as Liberia and Nigeria for example, which have trouble with overcrowding and sanitation would need a different number of appropriated funds because of their circumstances.

Despite the complexity of the issues discussed and the major differences in opinion among the groups, one thing all delegates seemed able to agree on was their optimism regarding the future. Hopefully, SOCHUM will be able to channel their feelings of ingenuity into action that will actually be globally beneficial.