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The Global Classroom 2014 on the UPR

The **Global Classroom**, a weeklong event gathering students, professors and experts to discuss one international topic on HR, this year focused on the **Universal Periodic Review**. At the opening session on Monday 12th May 2014, after introducing the participants, the event took off with an introduction to the UPR mechanism and a lecture on the differences and complementarities of the UPR and the treaty bodies given by **Prof. Michael O'Flaherty**, Established Professor of Human Rights Law and Director of the Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland Galway. He drew attention to the fact that the **UPR is a politicized mechanism, whereby States examine the human rights record of their peers**. The reviews of States take place in a UPR Working Group which consists of the 47 members of the Council. The documents on which the reviews are based are:

1) information provided by the State under review, which can take the form of a "*national report*";
 2) information contained in the reports of independent human rights experts and groups, known as the Special Procedures, human rights treaty bodies, and other UN entities;
 3) information from other stakeholders including national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations.

Michael O'Flaherty's presence at the Global Classroom

The audience during O'Flaherty's speech

Prof. O'Flaherty pointed out that there is increasing evidence of synergies being developed between the UPR and the treaty bodies, which are committees of independent experts that monitor implementation of the core international human rights treaties. States tend to refer to treaty bodies compilations to identify human rights problems and treaty bodies are encouraged to perform better to the benefit of a consistent international human rights oversight and implementation.

Stefania Dall'Oglio and Jean-Claude Vignoli

Some of the Global Campus students during the conference

Different perspectives were then brought into discussion through the interventions of the **panel of speakers**. **Stefania Dall'Oglio**, Secretary General of Committee for human rights (CIDU) at the Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry, depicted how the national report of Italy for the second Cycle was prepared and a consultation with stakeholders carried out. Besides different hearings at the Italian Parliament, the national report on the UPR implementation will be available for consultation online. **Jean-Claude Vignoli**, Programme Director of UPR Info, highlighted that apart from being mainly an international instrument of peer pressure of states, UPR has proven to be a useful tool for civil society engagement and cooperation. **Miloon Kothari**, Former UN Special rapporteur for Social Housing, claimed that for a real change on the ground, civil society should use the UPR process and the reviews happening in Geneva to create momentum and organize a genuine national mobilization. The interventions of the panellists nurtured a lively debate with views being shared among students and professors from different regions of the world.

Miloon Kothari, former UN Special rapporteur for Social Housing

The opening session was followed by presentations of Global Campus students and professors on cases of implementation as well as challenges and opportunities linked to the UPR mechanism.

At the closing session on Friday 16th May, students split up in three different working groups with the purpose of giving and account of the discussion of the Global Classroom and make recommendations on the following key issues: UPR follow-up and compliance mechanisms and the relationship between the UPR and the treaty bodies.

GC Students' expectations in terms of learning and exchange were met to a great extent. The success of the event was also underpinned by the preparation of both the professors and students of the GC and the interest in the topic and the debate which remained always high.

Global Classroom smiling group at the Monastery in Lido