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Ana Alecsandru, UNA Youth Conference - New Nuclear Realities (February 2013)

Ana Alecsandru, an **MA International Relations (Security) (/postgraduate/courses/taught/govsoc/international-relations-security.aspx)** student in POLSIS recently took part in the UNA Youth Conference - New Nuclear Realities in February 2013.

This event allowed me to gain an insight into the challenges facing the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. The programme included interactive discussions with high profile nuclear professionals regarding the current situation of the international non-proliferation regime and the nuclear disarmament under the auspices of the United Nations and IAEA. Specifically, the challenges were related to the creation of a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East, the reduction of nuclear arsenals worldwide, the implementation of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and formulation of a treaty to end the production of fissile material for weapons.

The first panel discussed in-depth the issues mentioned above. This part of the conference offered me a general background for the following sessions. I met several interns working for the UNA-UK during the networking lunch and I found out more information about their career opportunities.

The conference offered three parallel sessions after lunch and I chose to explore the ideas from the morning policy discussion with young professionals from IISS, Chatham House, BASIC and ICAN UK. It was during this session when I started a discussion on the topic of 'trust deficit' in the nuclear world. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the representative from Chatham House was writing her PhD on this topic, whilst the one from IISS used to work with Professor Nicholas Wheeler on a similar topic. They both made some useful reading suggestions for my dissertation.

The last keynote speech by Lord Hannay of Chiswick assessed the options and the opportunities for the difficult 2015 NPT Review Conference. Limited progress appears possible, although both optimistic and pessimistic outlooks were common among participants. Most see the 1995, 2000 and 2010 meetings as great success stories, enabled by strong compromises. However, a number of factors suggest finding agreement in 2015 will be difficult. Nuclear non-proliferation and facilitating access to the benefits of peaceful uses of nuclear energy are likely to be contentious issues. A US ratification of the CTBT looks questionable, settlement on a legal framework addressing fissile materials appears unlikely, and a new US-Russia agreement on their nuclear arsenals is assessed as improbable. Nuclear optimists claim that the safeguards system of the IAEA has become much more sophisticated. Basically, the international community obtained a roadmap in 2010 through the agreed work plan, and while compliance with the action plan is unlikely to be perfect, this instrument allows for an increased level of accountability.

Degrees and course information

- **International Relations (with specialist pathways) MA/PGDip (/postgraduate/courses/taught/govsoc/international-relations.aspx)**
- **International Relations (Security) MA/PGDip (/postgraduate/courses/taught/govsoc/international-relations-security.aspx)**

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