

Tsveta Petrova, Bulgarian Mission to the United Nations

From May the 28th to August the 1st, 2001, I interned at the Bulgarian Mission to the United Nations. During my stay there, the mission was in the midst of its campaign for a non-permanent membership of the Security Council in 2002-2003. Most of the diplomatic activity of the Mission consisted of preparations for the Security Council Elections. I was able to observe bilateral diplomacy in the context of multilateral diplomacy and to juxtapose it to multilateral diplomacy from the regular activities of the UN and to bilateral diplomacy, which I observed earlier this year during my internship at the Bulgarian Embassy in Washington, DC.

During July, Bulgaria chaired the group of Eastern European States. I was able to observe and take part in all the activities with which any mission to the UN would normally occupy itself. I was able to see what the daily routines are and the urgent matters that a mission takes up. I also to saw how the UN bodies are connected and work together. I was also entrusted with a vast range of tasks and responsibilities which included following the work of the Security Council and writing information notes and aid-memoirs. I had the opportunity to follow several special events of the UN, such as the one on AIDS, for example, as well as Habitat III. I followed and reported on the High Level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Pre-sessional working group and the Committee preparing the World Summit for Children, and UN Conference on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

All the special events dealt with human rights. Most interesting for me turned out to be Habitat III, which considered the effects and implications of globalization. It complimented my class with Professor Baruah in "Politics of Globalization" course. In our class discussions, we had noted that nowadays global connections allow for dynamic interactions among the numerous global actors and thus bring a new level of complexity to the relationship between policy and practice. We had also observed that as global forces have asserted themselves, the sovereignty of governments has declined. Even more importantly, at the UN I observed how the gap in serving the public interest is being taken up more and more by local authorities and NGOs. NGOs are working increasingly with municipalities to improve services and participation for the relatively disadvantaged. As the civil society becomes more organized and effective – the UN reports triumph - municipal institutions are democratizing.

Paradoxically, I observed, that the benefits of NGO participation (specialized and useful resources) to states are unevenly dispersed and unevenly received . So far neither effectiveness, nor the democratic character of global civil society

is necessarily enhanced. Enhancing participation of civil society in governance may enhance power of self-interested groups that are already powerful and thus undermine the political process and lead to low effectiveness.

The Habitat session focused on how urban settlements mediate the reciprocal relationships between globalization on the one hand, and the economic and human development on the other. There is strong polarization with inequalities growing because the benefits of globalization have not accumulated to everyone alike. Important in this sense is the gaining significance of the human rights concept of social exclusion: minimized involvement in the political decision making, which can result from income inequality, as well as a number of inequalities of horizontal dimensions including gender, religion and ethnicity. The UN reports reflected on the positive and negative consequences of globalization and on the ways of turning those into a positive force for everyone. The emphasis was on the fact that even if the objectives of economic growth dominate the state's policies, economic growth must be pursued in the context of social justice and environmental sustainability for development to be successful.

Also, very importantly, I was able to see how the specific study presented at the Habitat session was translated into policy appropriate for Bulgaria. The experts working at the mission participated in an intensive dialogue of the international community and exchange of ideas and information about projects that had been successful.

The Bulgarian diplomats considered the main proposal of the session: local political coalitions together with important groups from civil society should attempt to shape their cities to maximize what they see as benefits from globalization. They proposed a shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism, i.e, they suggested that cities should be viewed as a product to be marketed to appeal to global investors. They prepared specific guidelines for finding resources to meet, for example, the internationally recognized right to an adequate standard of living, including housing. Other suggestions, as well as contacts to other cities going through the same program, were provided.