

OBS MUN 2023 – NEWSLETTER DAY 1

Welcome!

And so it begins! We are very glad to welcome you to our MUN conference and hope you will enjoy our daily newsletter, featuring articles on the committee sessions, workshops, guest-speakers, highlights, interviews and more. We tend to live through our happiest moments at the highest speed. With time, faces, places and conversations blur into what can only be described as a wave of feeling, a sensation we remember even after forgetting its cause. So, it is in an attempt at preserving memories of the next three days that we present this newsletter.



Opening Ceremony Speeches



Maria João Cerqueira, our Chief of Staff and Head of Activities, started off OBS MUN Day 1 with a memorable and empowering speech. Cerqueira passionately addressed the crowd of around 350 people, and highlighted her enthusiasm to be able to take part in organising this reputable event. She humbly thanked the staff members, and delegates for their arduous work and participation. “The future is uncertain, and our top

priority is to prepare younger generations to become more aware, educated, tolerant and, above all, critical thinkers [...]” said Maria Cerqueira while reminding the audience that the entire event is student led.

Maria João has participated in many previous MUN events as typist and delegate, among others, but this is her first year carrying such a heavy title, which she is very honoured to have. Her continuous participation demonstrates her dedication and experience for this particular job.



Pedro Pinho, also known as our Secretary General and Head of Operations, has put in immense effort and time into preparing, planning and executing this conference, not only for OBS, but also for every other school present. His efforts have been taking place over the past months - nearly reaching a year - simply to ensure the best experience for everyone. Pinho runs the club for delegates at OBS and takes his own free time to ensure perfection.

In his opening ceremony speech, Pinho welcomed the staff, delegates, teachers and guests as well as thanked Natixis Porto for their valued support. He related the exciting schedule for the day and explained the core of an MUN conference - “[...] they're like a UN meeting, but with less politics and more fun.”

Pinho also solemnly mentioned last year's OBS MUN which, while still exciting and educational, was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He talked about the many struggles experienced by our team and how despite them, we managed to host an eventful conference.

Matheus Andrade, who is our Deputy Secretary General and the youngest person OBS has ever had with such a title, was the third person to take the



stage. Just like the two speakers before him, Andrade humbly thanked everyone for their presence and hard work.

In his speech, Matheus highlighted the many topics being discussed in each committee, like controlling inflation on international trade, ensuring world sustainability, equitable human rights and rights to abortion, equal access to infantile education, the issue of the efficient production and dissemination of reliable treatment and prevention measures against HIV, nuclear weapons and many others issues. Matheus explained the importance of each topic and their prevalent presence in our world today.

Guest Speakers

Our first guest speaker was Maria João Carrapato, chair of the Board of Governors of Oporto British School and Director of Investor Relations and Sustainability at NOS SGPS since 2020.



Sustainability adds purpose, Maria João Carrapato told us as she convincingly argued for the intrinsic connection between finance and sustainability, after all even the abstract world of numbers and business relies on earthly things. Rapidly accelerating global warming has certainly brought things into perspective as we seem to have finally realised that our relationship with our planet has been, for the last few centuries at least, parasitic when it should have been symbiotic. Change is a word – paradoxically short for the magnitude of its meanings – that is thrown around often and yet as individuals we find

change hard to grapple with, especially when it concerns big issues such as our futures. When big corporations fail to enact the changes we are told we are supposed to be making, most of us feel powerless - if they can't do it, then how are we supposed to? - so it was refreshing to hear Maria João Carrapato say that sustainability is a business concern and that more and more companies are being obliged to follow guidelines on sustainability. It was quite impressive to hear her detailing all the changes enacted so far at her company, namely the creation of an electric car fleet and the reforestation carbon offset initiative. Maria João Carrapato works for NOS, one of the largest integrated telecommunications and entertainment groups in Portugal so, naturally, the topic of the digital future also came up. It was equally heartening to hear that the company is concerned with the digital divide and involved in multiple initiatives to promote digital literacy and digital skills in underprivileged schools.



Our third guest speaker was Maria Antónia Torres, she is Partner as well as Diversity, Inclusion and Net Zero leader at PwC. The focus of her speech was gender equality. When discussing the speech with one chair, I was impressed to note that he remembered one of the quotes cited word for word: "If you educate

a man, you educate one person. If you educate a woman, you educate a generation." (Brigham Young). Another audience member recalled her explaining that it would be a 100 years until we closed the gender gap, an enlightening but concerning statistic. These were the kinds of powerful images that characterized Maria Antónia Torres' speech. The issue of gender discrimination is no longer as glaringly obvious as it was years ago and so it is easy to make the mistake of believing that the struggle for gender equality is over. Unfortunately, it is not and we need speeches like Maria Antónia Torres' to remind us of this from time to time.

Delegate Interviews

Teresa Teixeira – Human Rights – Colégio São João de Brito

Teresa was the first delegate I interviewed and at first, she was shy and quiet, but as the interview progressed Teresa appeared to be more relaxed and at ease. She described her first day at OBS MUN as being “educational, new, exciting,” and included the exciting fact that this is her first time participating at an MUN conference. Regardless, she has been able to enjoy the talks, for example the guest speakers we had this morning, and the people she got to meet. Teresa is representing Denmark and when asked about any struggles she has experienced so far she said “I don’t exactly know how this works so I’m still trying to find out how to do everything,” which shows her determination. Although she has experienced some struggles while representing Denmark, Teresa says that she would not choose to represent any other country because she enjoys the research and learning new things.

Lilly Kim – DISEC – Oporto British School



The next interviewee was Lilly Kim and Lilly cheerfully used the words “exciting, nervous, happy” to describe her current OBS MUN experience. She has enjoyed meeting new people from different nationalities and schools, and she’s most excited about getting the opportunity to debate. She is also extremely thankful for all the help the chairs and co-chairs have been providing for her throughout the day. Lilly is representing Ireland, and she said that her biggest challenge so far has been trying to find a co-submitter for her clauses as she hasn’t been able to communicate with other people yet. Just like Teresa, Lilly would not

change Ireland for another country to represent because her personal opinions match those of the official government in Ireland.

Bernardo de Paula Vaz – Security Council – International Sharing School Taguspark

At first, Bernardo struggled to describe his first day at OBS MUN in only three words, but he ended up choosing “meeting, talking, debating” as his words of choice. His favorite thing about participating in OBS MUN is learning about countries he had not previously known about and “Of course, debating.” Bernardo is representing France, and he assertively says that he has not experienced any struggles, however, if he had the chance to he would represent the United States of America as he feels that “It is the main, biggest and most important country.”

Carmela Mundaray – WHO (2) – Deutsche Schule Lissabon



Carmela was the first delegate I interviewed, after she was kind enough to volunteer when none of her fellow delegates were too eager to talk to me. Her kindness, happy demeanour and readiness to seriously answer our slightly awkward questions, definitely put me at ease. When asked to describe her day in three words, she chose: “interesting, multicultural and fun”. I asked her about MUN and what she found appealing about it. Carmela stated that she enjoyed the opportunity to meet new people and learn about different countries and cultures. She is representing South Africa in the World Health Organisation (2) and told me that the biggest difficulty that she had faced so far was the fact that her country seriously suffered from many of the health problems being discussed in the committee, namely HIV, and so the research process was complicated

and time-consuming. I was surprised to hear Carmela's answer to the country she would like to represent if given the opportunity to choose and why: "I would pick Russia because I feel like I could be really aggressive with everyone." Something tells me that her gentleness hides a fierce debater...

Cecilia Alvarez Garneria - ECOSOC - La Manzoni Milano

Cecilia was a pleasure to interview, her eloquent answers to my not so eloquent questions were very interesting to record and the knowledge demonstrated about her country impressive. Cecilia chose the words "sleepy, interesting and enriching" to describe her first day at OBSMUN. She told me she loves participating in MUNs because of her passion for debating and chaos: "I especially love funny moments. I love it when things inevitably go wrong. I love to hate so I actually enjoy it when something frustrating happens, for example when one clause is clearly going to get voted against and people keep making amendments to strike out small bits of it. It is infuriating and I love it." Her sense of humour definitely came through in her answers; my recording of our conversation is filled with the sound of my own laugh (truly painful to listen to). Cecilia is representing Angola in ECOSOC and very intelligently described to me the challenges of doing so: "Angola is difficult in regards to the issue of forming alliances with other countries. It is sort of a friend of everyone. In recent years, Angola has been heading more for countries like the USA but in the past it has had links with Russia, especially when you think about its flag. It is a cog and a scythe which looks a lot like the communist hammer and sickle, so the connection is still there. It is a complicated issue." When asked which country she would choose to represent and why, Cecilia told me that she would pick North Korea because it was the first country she ever represented at an MUN and therefore it has a special place in her heart. She also stated that: "It [North Korea] is very secretive and I love finding information about it that I probably shouldn't find." North Korean secret services you have been warned...

Henrique Abrunhosa - Human Rights - Individual Delegate (Brave Generation Academy)



Henrique answered all my questions with atypical confidence and assertion and showed himself ready to be open and honest about everything he was asked. He told me that the three words he would use to describe his day would be 'informative', 'presentation' and "I wouldn't

say boring.... but there was no action." His favourite thing about MUN is debating, seeing as he really enjoys discussing global issues. Henrique is representing Luxembourg in the Human Rights Committee and self-assuredly stated that since it is a very neutral country, he hasn't yet encountered any serious difficulties. As an example, Henrique told me about his experience representing Saudi Arabia at another MUN, which he describes as much harder since the country did not share several commonly held views at the UN. However, he said that he will have to wait for the committee sessions before he can say for certain that Luxembourg is an easy country to represent. When asked which country he would choose to represent and why, Henrique stated that, for his committee, he would have chosen a controversial country like Afghanistan to: "heat up the debate a bit." Henrique's cool confidence will be enough to intimidate any delegate.

About Our Venue

Natixis is a French multinational corporate and investment bank. It is a subsidiary of Groupe BPCE and is responsible for almost 16,000 employees in 38 different countries. In Porto alone, Natixis employs 2,000 people.





Natixis' goal in Porto is to transform traditional banking, something that is clear simply by observing its vibrant, innovative spaces and dynamic, unobtrusive integration of technology into the workplace. Part of the space we are occupying is divided into 'villages', each area representing a different city. As you walk down the labyrinthine corridors, you might spot a large wooden boat or intricately designed giraffe so that cultures and cities merge, leaving you with a baffling sense of non-place; Porto is reduced to a distant memory. It is hard not to see the parallel with the spirit of MUN: a mingling of national identities and cultures, where delegates from all around the world make an effort to represent countries different from their own. We are very grateful to Natixis for having allowed us to make use of this wonderful facility.

We also had the privilege to hear from Etienne Huret, CEO of the Natixis branch in Porto. During his speech, Mr Huret discussed the struggles his employees faced while working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how that changed his perception of what office spaces should be like. This explains the building's progressive and unique look.

Credits

Photography:

- Alexandre Camelo
- Francisca Cardoso
- Henrique Corazza
- Joana Enneking
- Lucia Suanzes
- Manuela Silva
- Mateo Gaito

Journalists and Editors:

- Lara Machado
- Neyla Lobato

Head of Press and Communications:

- Alessia Delgado