

## DAG HAMMARSKJOLD SYMPOSIUM BEIJING, CHINA



As part of a three part series, WFUNA hosted its second Dag Hammarskjold Symposium in Beijing, China on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, in collaboration with the Research Center of the United Nations and International Organizations from Beijing Foreign Studies University, Embassy of Sweden in Beijing and United Nations Association of China. The Symposium Series, which was also held in Nairobi in June, commemorates the life of former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold, and his contribution to conflict prevention. By reflecting on his vision for the United Nations, the Symposium took the opportunity to discuss the emerging norm the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) and the role of the UN in conflict prevention

given the change in the nature of world conflict since Hammarskjold's tenure.

More than 100 people, including distinguished scholars and diplomats from 35 countries, students and scholars from domestic universities and more than eight civil society organizations including the Asia-Pacific Center for the Responsibility to Protect, attended the Symposium. WFUNA's Youth Network was also represented by youth members from UNA-Nepal, UNA-Armenia, UNA-Australia, UNA-New Zealand and UNA-Korea.



The program began with an introduction to the life of Dag Hammarskjold by the Viktoria Li, Head of Political Affairs from the Swedish Embassy in Beijing. Ms Li provided guests with an understanding of Hammarskjold's exemplary leadership style and how he used this style to develop the role of the UN in conflict prevention. In addition to hearing about the life of Dag Hammarskjold and the legacy he left, guests participated in four panel discussions on various issues relating to R2P. The topics included; What is R2P?; Conflict prevention, Early Warning and Capacity Building; Hammarskjold Legacy – The Three Principles of Peacekeeping Operations; and Case studies of Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, Libya and Syria.



Each panel consisted of a presenter and 1 or 2 discussants who reacted to the presenters ideas on the issue at hand, while the audience was also given an opportunity to ask questions and make comments. The panelists included distinguished professors from the Chinese academic community, members from civil society as well as representatives from the Chinese army.

Part 2 of the program gave us an opportunity to reflect on Hammarskjold contributions with an opening address from Ambassador Freden, Swedish Ambassador to China. Ambassador Freden provided us with an overview of the character of Hammarskjold, remaining us of Hammarskjold's legacy by way of explaining his adoption of preventative diplomacy and the three principles of peacekeeping. The final panel, which included,

Ambassador Chen Jian – President of UNA-China, Prof Shi Yinlong, - Counselor of the States Council, Professor of Renmin University of China and Erik Wennerstrom – Principal Legal Advisor Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden, reflected on the question “Given the change in the nature of world conflict, what would Dag Hammarskjold think of the UN’s emerging norm, ‘The Responsibility to Protect’”.



It was evident throughout the day that most, if not all, not only commended the great contribution of Hammarskjold but were positive in thinking of the progress made on conflict prevention by the UN to date. It was agreed by many that in theory R2P was a plausible and valuable concept and strongly emphasized the need to strengthen conflict prevention mechanisms. Questions remained, however, on best practices for implementing R2P. Many raised the issue of respecting the importance of sovereignty, and limiting mandates for intervention. This was not without providing suggestions of including safeguards and refining procedures to ensure the international community does uphold its responsible to prevent mass atrocities.

As an outcome of the Symposium WFUNA was published in the Chinese news [China remembers former UN Secretary-General Hammarskjold](#), People's Daily Online, 1 December, 2011 and was congratulated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China on providing a forum for discussion. Many, including some of the panelists, highlighted the value in the Symposium, commenting that they themselves had learnt a great deal from the day.