I am very grateful to have the privilege of participating at the New York National Model United Nations (NMUN) Conference as a member of an "Outstanding Delegation". After months of preparation, countless hours of position paper writing, and several rounds of simulations, we won the highest honor and proved that hard work pays off. I am honored to represent the Republic of Tunisia in the conference along with my ambitious, supportive, and brilliant teammates.

When I found out that the Maxell School Model United Nations team would represent the Republic of Tunisia, I was excited because Tunisia, as the leader of the Arab Spring, has consistently made headlines in mainstream media. I learned some basic knowledge about the country from my politics of the European Union (EU) class when I studied abroad in Madrid, Spain. In that class, I researched the Arab Spring and how it affected the dynamics of the EU. Through my research and participation on the team, I learned a lot about the smallest country in the Maghreb region and its unique history.

The Republic of Tunisia has a population about 10.8 million and is bordered by Algeria, Libya, and the Mediterranean Sea. In 1956, Habib Bourguiba led Tunisia to its independence from France and became the first Tunisian President. In 2011, the Republic of Tunisia gained global attention by starting the Jasmine Revolution and becoming the birthplace of the Arab Spring. Consequently, the revolution overthrew the
autocratic President Zine El Abidne Ben Ali and led to a new constitution for Tunisia. On January 26 2014, the government of Tunisia adopted the new constitution, which guarantees women’s rights and recognizes Islam as the official state religion, but protects freedom of belief. Surprisingly for the Arab world, Tunisian women hold more than 20% of seats in both chambers of parliament. Tunisia has developed close relationships with the EU and other African countries through its participation in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), La Francophonie, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Arab League, and the African Union.

The Republic of Tunisia joined the United Nations on November 12, 1956 and has been actively participating in a number of UN activities. Tunisia served on the Security Council three times in 1960, 1980, and 2000 and held the presidency of General Assembly in 1961. Tunisia has followed the guidelines of the UN to promote democracy, freedom, economic development, and international cooperation. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commended Tunisia's democratic transition as “another historic milestone.” As the third nation in the world to adopt climate protection in a constitution, Tunisia firmly recognizes the importance of a transformation to a green economy and promotes sustainable energy development. Due to its extraordinary efforts in adopting The Solar Energy Plan in 2010 and reducing 1.3 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually, the Tunisian government received positive recognition from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Tunisia has strongly supported the UN and the EU’s efforts to strengthen international and regional cooperation through participating program. Tunisia has attempted to maintain good relationships with its neighbors and support the Maghreb
integration. As the advocate for realism and moderation in the Middle East, Tunisia
served as the headquarters of the Arab League from 1970 to 1990. In order to maintain a
peaceful Middle East, Tunisia worked as a moderator in many regional negotiations. It
continues to demonstrate its commitment to world peace and security by fulfilling its UN
obligations and further embracing cooperation with the UN and other partners in the
region.

The United Nations, an intergovernmental organization and a global institution,
consisting of 193 sovereign nations, aims to promote world peace and security, human
rights, social and economic development, provide humanitarian aid in cases of natural
and man-made disasters, and advance the rule of law. The organization was established
after WWII and has six principal organs: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the
Economic and Social Council, the Secretariat, the International Court of Justice, and the
United Nations Trusteeship Council. The UN attempts to address issues and challenges
which may endanger world peace and the wellbeing of mankind and the environment. It
tends to create global polices which requires collective efforts from all the Member
States, but the lack of reinforcing mechanism makes the implementation process very
difficult. Many critics argue that the UN’s bureaucratic system makes it inefficient and
corrupt. However, I agree with Stanley Meisler’s view considering the UN’s achievement
in decolonization and peacekeeping. He highlights that, "the UN never fulfilled the hopes
of its founders, but it accomplished a great deal nevertheless" (Meisler, 1995). My
experiences at the NMUN Conference have taught me to appreciate the accomplishments
of the UN and understand the overwhelming issues it has to solve.
Representing the Republic of Tunisia forced me to think and act like a Tunisian diplomat in the NMUN conference. I not only needed to understand the core interests and foreign policy of my country, but also had to know the potential regional and international partners and their interests and agenda. One of the most important points that I have learned from the conference lies in when and how to compromise in order to achieve a broader consensus.

The conference simulation helped me better understand the central concepts of international cooperation, strategic negotiations, and compromise. Globalization brings different parts of the world together. Technology and social networks connect everyone instantly, and international economic systems make countries interdependent. Our generation faces many global challenges, which require international cooperation and collective efforts from all the Member States. Bilateral and regional cooperation still matter, but putting them into a broader perspective and utilizing them as a solid foundation for international cooperation will be beneficial in the future. Some of these global challenges include climate change, population growth, and terrorism. Through international cooperation, strategic negotiations and compromise, Member States may reach a consensus and discover global solutions. The conference simulation helped me to understand these global issues better.

As a delegate of the Republic of Tunisia at the UNEP in the NMUN, I discovered my interest and potential as a future diplomat or a consultant with specialties in international affairs or government relations. I have to thank Madame Director, the Dais, and my teammates helped me prepare for the conference and gained confidence through multiple public speaking practice sessions. To be a diplomat representing my country on
the international stage has been my dream since I was very young. My parents have worked for a regional government and been involved with media and politics for the last 15 years. Therefore, I have tremendous passion to work with or for the government in the future. This passion drove me to apply for the Maxwell School Model UN team and started me on my NMUN journey.

On a personal level, I enjoyed every movement of my experience and was glad to see my growth in English public speaking. As a student who had two Radio shows and hosted many ceremonies in Chinese, I still feared English public speaking. I was very upset with myself because I failed to transfer my speaking skills across languages. After identifying the problem and practicing with my teammates, I felt confident and began to understand how to present ideas in a comprehensive and persuasive way in English. As a veteran delegate, this year’s experience has been amazing. I participated and witnessed how the Maxwell School Model UN team made tremendous progress and won the “Outstanding Delegation” Award. Each time I participated in the NMUN, the experience surprised and helped me to learn something new about the team and myself. I would not trade my experiences for anything because it became one of the most memorable parts of my college life.

Preparing for the course and the conference required a lot of time and effort. As a veteran, I had some basic ideas about what to expect and how to prepare. Last year’s experience taught me to prepare in advance. During winter break, I started to conduct preliminary research about the Republic of Tunisia, the UN system, and the NMUN Rules of Procedures. At the beginning of this semester, I still felt anxious and nervous. I doubted about my own capabilities, although I came to every session prepared. I
memorized basic information on Tunisia, from its population to its foreign policy. I paid attention to every piece of news, which might relate to Tunisia. I read the textbook and gained a solid knowledge of all aspects of the UN and my committee.

Furthermore, the “Stand and Deliver” sessions still gave me nightmares. The impromptu speeches were very challenging and required me to think like a Tunisian diplomat and provided insights on the country’s policy or view. However, the practice definitely helped me to feel confident in English public speaking and fearless to give a speech before the entire committee in the conference. No doubt, our team’s high standards produced great results. The “Stand and Deliver” practice pushed my boundaries and defined my new capabilities.

After many weeks of intense training and stressful sessions, the NMUN conference finally arrived, and we were already to begin the adventure. I was honored to represent the Maxwell School and Tunisia. This year, we had chance to participate in the rules and procedures training. It allowed me to talk with other early arrivers, identified competitive and well-prepared delegations, and obtained confidence from reviewing the rules. The opening ceremony was eye opening and overwhelming although I experienced it last year. Seating in Hilton ballroom with nearly 4,000 students who shared similar interests of the UN as me made me excited, trembled, and looked forward to the conference. I could not breathe but I was ready to meet new friends, find alliances, build connections, and caucus like a professional. Although this year we did not have much time to greet other delegates or shake hands before or after the ceremony due to the request of the conference staff, I still could feel the same passion and enthusiasm from my fellow delegates all throughout the conference.
During committee sessions, the Dais and the delegates took procedures seriously and conducted themselves in a professional matter. I was very grateful to work with my partner Terry in the committee of UNEP. We arrived early to get the best seats in the committee and established great presence of Tunisia and the Maxwell School. We discussed ideas before the sessions or during formal sessions. During informal sessions, we worked separately with different groups and wrote multiple working papers. After the sessions, we exchanged information and made sure that everything was on the right track. This strategy worked very well because it ensured the quality and quantity of the working papers that we sponsored.

I enjoyed writing working papers with my group, which consisted of ten brilliant women from different delegations. We exchanged ideas, debated, identified each country’s self interests, and had a chance to know each other on a personal level. We worked together to draft a working paper until 2:30 in the morning and appreciated the tremendous support from the group. Everyday, I was the first person to come to the session because I wanted not only to pick the best seats for Tunisia but also save seats for my working paper partners. This strategy has three main benefits. First, it saved time during informal sessions for drafting a working paper because we did not have to find a location to write or wait for other delegates. Second, it made communication during formal session easier because we could pass notes to each other directly instead of relying on pages. Third, it left a positive impression, made other delegations love Tunisia, and enjoyed working with us. Finally, UNEP had 25 working papers on the floor and 21 draft resolutions were passed. All the three working papers that Tunisia sponsored were passed. Although the process was exhausting and terrifying, nothing could compare the
excitement of witnessing our working papers became draft resolutions on the voting day. At that moment, all these sleepless nights and hard work paid off.

The last day of the conference all delegations met at the UN Headquarters and received their awards. When I saw the majestic UN building and flags of all the Member State, I felt emotional and remembered why I love international relations major so much. Although we could not go to the General Assembly Hall because it was under construction, we had a wonderful chance to go the part of the building where the UN staff actually works everyday. I was so proud to receive the “Outstanding Delegation” Award alongside my teammates. I am so grateful that our efforts and hard work was recognized and honored before every delegation. No words could describe my feeling and excitement. Everything just happened so fast and became montages that stuck in my head. The first day of class, “Stand and Deliver” sessions, committee assignments, the conference, and team debriefings all flashed back and became one of the best memories of my college life.

Overall, I did enjoy my second NMUN experience and love every single member on our team. The team dinner was amazing, and delegate dance was quite relaxing and entertaining. I have learned a lot about myself as a delegate and a teammate. I discovered my passion and overcame the fear of English public speaking. I appreciate the help from Madame Director, the Dais, and my fellow delegates. I could not have achieved this honor without the support of the team. I would love to contribute more to the Maxwell School Model UN team in the future.

If I may share some thoughts and observations from the past experiences, I would recommend assigning committees assignment earlier in the semester so delegates have
more time to prepare for topics and get into the role as quick as possible. During preparation session, the team should pay more attention to the funding mechanism of the UN and understand the capacity of each committee. I suggest that the team spend more time on preparing position paper writing and resolution writing. The team should continue the simulation practice because it does help delegates to think on their feet and represent the country’s core interests. Additionally, the simulation should be tailored to fit the representing country’s real situation.

In conclusion, my two-year NMUN experience has been extremely rewarding and changed my life profoundly. The class and the conference imitate the real world situation. It not only challenged me academically but also enabled me valuable skills such as researching, public speaking, and negotiating to overcome future obstacles in work. I used the knowledge that I learned from classroom and applied it to the real world. Through this process, I discovered my potential to be a diplomat and a leader. The Global Governance Practicum class is definitely one of the best classes that I have taken at Syracuse University. I will be forever grateful and carry my skills and knowledge to make the world a better place. If I have a chance to be on the team again, I would do it all over again!
Reference: