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1. Message from the President Dear ESIL Members, International law is of critical relevance for a wide range of problems that matter to people around the world on a day-to-day basis...

From this perspective, it is remarkable that international lawyers have largely limited their time and energy to a relatively small set of issues. While we would all agree that the days when international law mainly addressed questions of sovereignty, territory and the use of force are long gone...

A count of the contributions published in EJIL, and on the EJIL: Talk! blog is revealing. Two points in particular are striking. Firstly, the majority of contributions (over 35%) do not address any particular 'real-life problems' but are of a conceptual or theoretical nature.

The second striking point is that, when we look at the pieces in EJIL and on EJIL: Talk! that do address concrete problems, our intellectual energy has been focused on a relatively small set of issues. Almost 35% of contributions address human rights issues.

At the 2010 ESIL conference in Cambridge, Sir Daniel Bethlehem delivered opening remarks that are worth recalling (his remarks can be found in the online audio recording from that conference).

Five years on, this question is as pertinent as ever. There continues to be a whole range of wider issues of population growth, poverty, food safety, global health, extinction of species and environmental protection which continue to raise critical questions about the quality and capacity of international law and its institutions.

ESIL can do its part to redirect focus and attention to a wider spectrum of topics. The diversity of expertise of practitioners and scholars in ESIL presents us with a unique opportunity to contribute to the debates on institutional and regulatory questions that are of critical importance for many people around the world but that have not yet been able to sufficiently grab our intellectual attention.

ESIL's interest groups on biolaw, International Environmental Law, and Migration and Refugee Law are all well placed to contribute to the discussions on these hot and less mainstream topics, and practitioners and scholars are invited to participate actively in these groups.

Annual conferences, organized about more general themes, also allow us to discuss some of these 'under the radar' topics. For instance, the next conference in Oslo will invite reflection on whether and why, in addressing some of these new challenges, international courts and tribunals may not be the only way to go, and what alternatives exist.

Membership is key for this. ESIL is closing in on the 1000th member. Recently, an entirely new online membership system has been set up, making registration for membership, payment, and enrollment in interest groups much easier.

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2. Guest Editorial

Les nouveaux modes de production de normes en droit international: quelques zones d'ombre Marco Sassoli, professeur et directeur du Département de droit international public et organisation internationale, Université de Genève, Suisse

Une étudiante qui affirmerait dans un examen de droit international public que les nouvelles règles du droit international se trouvent exclusivement dans des traités, du droit coutumier et des principes généraux de droit risque un échec, car il existe aujourd'hui un plus grand nombre de modes de production de normes, possédant aujourd'hui un caractère plus ou moins contraignant.

Nous sommes depuis longtemps habitués au droit mou décollant, avec une force normative relative mais bien réelle, de résolutions adoptées par les États au sein d'organisations internationales. Ces instruments sont élaborés d'une manière relativement transparente, sous les yeux de représentantes auto-déclarées de la « société civile » qui ont souvent grandement influencé leur contenu.

Dans bien des domaines, cette façon de produire le droit mou a perdu la cote au profit d'un autre mode de création. De nouveaux instruments (désignés comme « best practices », « guides interprétatifs », « principes », « standards », « manuels » ou « déclarations ») sont produits à huis clos par des représentants étatiques, des « experts gouvernementaux » ou des « experts [prétendument ou réellement] indépendants » dont le mode de désignation reste souvent mystérieux.

Pourtant, les avantages des sources traditionnelles ne devraient pas être oubliés. Les traités sont certes souvent négociés dans les coulisses mais, avant d'acquiescer une force normative, ils sont rendus publics, et sont souvent discutés et approuvés par des parlementaires. Dans la formation du droit coutumier, les populations ont de nombreuses occasions d'influencer la pratique et même l'expression de l'opinio juris de leurs autorités.

On me rétorquera que les besoins normatifs croissants – et souvent urgents – de la communauté internationale ne peuvent plus être satisfaits par les sources traditionnelles, que l'alternative au nouveau droit mou serait (horreur !) l'absence de toute règle, que la démocratie est absente ou fictive dans beaucoup de pays, et que je suis imprégné de la culture politique suisse avec ses éléments de démocratie directe, pouvant fonctionner dans quelques vallées alpines à risque de vide démocratique, mais que l'interdiction des minarets ou l'isolement en Europe) mais pas dans le vaste monde et pas pour résoudre les problèmes complexes auxquels nous faisons face.

La 11ème Conférence annuelle de la Société européenne de droit international (SEDI) se tiendra à Oslo, en Norvège, du 10 au 12 septembre 2015. La conférence sera accueillie par PluriCourts, un centre d'étude sur les rôles légitimes du système judiciaire dans l'ordre mondial à l'Université d'Oslo.

A draft programme is now available featuring speakers such as Peter Tomka, Judge and former President of the ICJ; James Crawford, ICJ Judge; Dirk Pulkowski, Senior Legal Counsel at the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and many other honorable speakers and exciting panels.

For more information, please visit www.ujio.no/esil2015

4. Reminder: 2015 Membership Fees

All members who have not yet paid their 2015 membership fee are kindly requested to do so. If you are not sure about your membership status, send an email to the ESIL Secretariat.

ESIL has a new online membership system and you should use this system to pay your fee either by credit card or by bank transfer. Since this is a completely new system, you will be asked to create a new account with a new password. The information will be saved for future payments.

If you wish to make a long-term commitment to the Society, details of Lifetime Membership can be found on the ESIL website.

6. Call for ESIL Reflections

ESIL Reflections is ESIL's series of online publications. All ESIL members are invited to take the opportunity to publish original Reflections on a topic of international law without writing a scholarly article – and get reflections, e.g. via EJIL: Talk!

The series is now in its fourth year and contributions are published monthly. The Reflections are sent to all ESIL members and are published on the ESIL website; the aim is to foster discussion between ESIL members and international law scholars and practitioners more generally.

ESIL Reflections address current topics or developments in international law in a way that is relatively short and accessible. The work undertaken has been devoted to a highly important, yet fairly theoretical underpinning of current developments in international law. They should be on-ed- ish style, fast-paced, reflective and entertaining papers that offer a fresh angle on something important quickly and effectively.

We aim for Reflections of about 1500 - 2000 words. Reflections need to be original and they will be reviewed. You can find former Reflections online. The editors are Anne van Aaken (editor-in-chief), Jutta Brunnee, Başak Çali and Jan Klabbers. Please contact Anne van Aaken if you would like to contribute.

6. Legal Regulation of European and Eurasian Migrations - Conference Report

On 11-12 December 2014, the Law Faculty of Kazan Federal University hosted an international conference on the theme "European and Eurasian Migration Systems: Similarities and Differences in Legal Regulation".

The Purpose of this conference was to analyze and discuss the current problems and challenges of modern international law, politics, economics and sociology regarding the characteristics of the European and Eurasian migration systems, the regulation of migration processes in the framework of regional organizations in Europe and Eurasia, as well as research into new trends and prospects in the legal regulation of migration processes.

A Conference Report authored by A.I. Abdullin and R.Sh. Davletgildeev - respectively Head and Associate professor at the International and European Law Department of Kazan Federal University - is available in English and French on the ESIL website.

7. News from the Interest Groups

Interest Group on International Human Rights Law: Call for Papers On the occasion of the 11th ESIL Conference in Oslo, the ESIL Interest Group on International Human Rights Law invites submissions for a roundtable on the "Impact of and Backlash against International Human Rights Courts and Quasi-Judicial Bodies" and the roundtable will focus on two inter-related questions: What is the impact of human rights courts and quasi-judicial bodies domestically? What are the sources of backlash against human rights courts and quasi-judicial bodies?

The deadline for the submission of abstracts is 15 April 2015. Full details on the IG website.

Interest Group on the EU as a Global Actor The ESIL Interest Group on the EU as a Global Actor recently organised a conference with the Centre for the Law of EU External Relations (CLEER) and the Academy of European Law on "The EU and International Dispute Settlement" which took place on 19 and 20 February 2015 at the European University Institute (EUI) in Fiesole.

On the occasion of the Latin-American Society of International Law (LASIL/SLADI) Annual Meeting, to be held in Rio de Janeiro on 13 - 15 August 2015, their new Interest Group on International Courts and Tribunals invites submissions in English, Spanish, French or Portuguese on the theme of "Latin America and International Adjudication".

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