A Profile

Organization and Officers

The UNA Flanders Belgium ‘VVN’ was established in 1976, in continuation of the former Belgian Association for the United Nations, and has been active in Flanders ever since.

Members of the Board include professors and researchers of international law and politics of the Flemish Universities, (former) diplomatic and Foreign Office staff, (former) UN staff...

VVN’s current President is Prof. Dr. Jan Wouters, Jean Monnet Chair ad personam EU and Global Governance, Full Professor of International Law and International Organizations, Director, Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies - Institute for International Law, KU Leuven, President, Flemish Foreign Affairs Council - President, United Nations Association Flanders Belgium (VVN).

Vice Presidents are Prof. Dr. Em. Marc Bossuyt, President of the Constitutional Court of Belgium, Prof. Dr. Cedric Ryngaert, Professor of International Law at the University of Leuven and Prof. Dr. Ann Pauwels, Professor of International Law at the University of Brussels and Nijmegen.

Honorary Presidents are Prof. Dr. Frank Maes, Prof. Dr. Em. Neri Sybesma-Knol, Free University of Brussels, Mr. Paul Ghijsels, former advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on development, Mr. Dirk Drijbooms, Director Apothiki Art Center, Prof. Dr. Em. Karel Wellens, University of Nijmegen, Prof. Dr. Marc Cogen, Vesalius College Brussels.

Honorary members of the Board are Ambassador Alex Reyn, Honorary Ambassador; Prof. Dr. Em. Erik Suy, former Legal Counsel of the United Nations; Mrs. Ria Heremans-Van Elslande, former Chief of UNIC Brussels; Mrs. Diane Verstraeten, former Secretary-General of Dept. Flanders International of the Flemish Community; Mrs. Wilma Goppel, former Chief of UNFPA EU; Mr. Eddy Laurijssen, former Director of ILO Brussels and Mrs. Christiane Decloedt.
Local (Youth) Chapters in Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent and Leuven organize events locally.

VVN has several commissions or Working Groups: Education, Monographs, Development Cooperation, Website, and Youth. The editorial board of the VVN's periodical Wereldbeeld meets regularly.

Publications

Periodical

VVN's periodical 'Wereldbeeld. Tijdschrift voor de Verenigde Naties' publishes four editions a year, with articles and commentaries on various United Nations events and developments, as well as news on the relationship between Flanders, Belgium and the European Union with the United Nations. Each edition has its own theme, such as economic and social affairs, development, peace & security, and human rights.

Monograph series

In 2005, VVN has launched a series of monographs called 'Wereldvisie'. The first monograph was published in June 2005, De Verenigde Naties: een wereld van verschil? ("The United Nations: A World of Difference?") and was launched at a press conference with the Belgian Prime Minister. Other monographs include: Misdaden tegen de mensheid, (Crimes against Humanity), België in de Veiligheidsraad 1946-2006 (Belgium in the Security Council), Anders globaliseren (A Fair Globalization), Mensenrechten: actuele brandpunten (Human Rights: Current Challenges), Water, bron van leven en conflicten (Water, source of life and conflicts), Langs de vuurlijn: De VN en gewapende conflicten (About the UN and armed conflicts), Ontwikkelingslanden en de nieuwe wereldorde (Developing countries and the new world order), De Gespecialiseerde Organisaties van de Verenigde Naties (The Specialized Organizations of the UN) and Migratie: Winnaars en verliezers (Migrations: winners and losers). The latest edition in this series is titled "UN Funds and Programmes" (2012).

Other Publications

Almost every year, at the occasion of United Nations Day (October 24th), an informative educational brochure is prepared on a UN-related subject, to be distributed to all children in secondary schools in Flanders. The project has the support of the Minister of Education and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. From 1998 on, VVN has actively cooperated with UNRIC Brussels in the preparation of this document. Former subjects include: “All Human Rights for all”; “The UN in the 21st Century”; “The UN and Racism”; “A new Development Project for the United Nations” (dealing with the Millennium Development Goals), “Child Trafficking”, “Modern Forms of Slavery” and “Migration".
VVN has regularly produced educational and information material. Relevant publications include: an English brochure “The UN Human Rights Council at work: from high hopes back to reality (2008); a pedagogical file on “The UN and space” (2009); a pedagogical booklet on “The internationalization of education (2010); a pedagogical file on “Sustainable development (2011). VVN is currently working on a pedagogical initiative involving “Marine World heritage”.

Activities and events

Colloquia and Seminars

VVN regularly organizes seminars and colloquia on subjects of special and current interest, such as the war in Iraq, the Durban Summit on Racism and its follow-up and the 10-year commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda, transnational corporate social responsibility, free trade agreements, UN reform “Delivering as One”. In addition, on or around October 24th (United Nations Day), VVN traditionally organizes an important colloquium on the work of the United Nations; on or around December 10th (Human Rights Day), it does so too with respect to a UN human rights topic.

Griffioen Gent); Emergency aid seminar (8 November 2010, with the participation of the
direction of UNICEF and UNRWA offices in Brussels and NGO leaders) Boudewijn
Building Brussels); The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations at the age of fifty:
State of affairs and challenges ahead (9 May 2011, in cooperation with others); Network
event for (former) interns at the international organizations (7 November 2011, Errera
House of the Flemish Minister – President); The Completion Strategy of the Rwanda
Tribunal and the Referral of Cases to Rwandan Courts (22 March 2012, in cooperation
with Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies and KULeuven Institute for
International Law); The UN and the international community when confronted with
worldwide challenges (24 October 2012, City Hall Brussels); Value for money, a blessing
or a threat for development cooperation? (6 December 2012, in cooperation with BTC-
CTB/VLIR-UOS/ VAIS, VVOB and MO).

Luncheon meetings

VVN has a long tradition of organizing informal Round Table luncheon meetings where
current problems and issues concerning the UN are discussed with top-level diplomats
and UN officials. These events are organized in cooperation with, and mostly take place
in the offices of, the United Nations Regional Information Office, UNRIC, or other UN
offices in Brussels. Participants include VVN members, members of Parliament, officials,
NGO representatives, journalists and students.

Past speakers include the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Head of the National
Red Cross, the Representative of ILO to the European Union, the Representative of
UNDP to the European Union, Belgium’s Permanent Representative to the United
Nations in New York, Belgium’s judge at the International Criminal Tribunal for the
former Yugoslavia, the UN Special Representative on the Prevention of Genocide and
Mass Atrocities... VVN is honored to be able to welcome former Belgian top diplomat
and chief of cabinet of Herman Van Rompuy baron Frans Van Daele at a luncheon
meeting in April.

Inter-university Student Projects

In December 2005, VVN organized the first inter-university Model United Nations in
Belgium (Brussels), which consisted of a three days’ UN Security Council simulation
exercise with the theme: ‘Iran Nuclear Case’. The participating students and university
assistants were students from four different Flemish Universities: Catholic University of
Leuven (KUL), Ghent University (UG), Antwerp University (UA) and the Free University
Brussels (VUB). The success of the first edition led to new initiatives and VVN has
organized a Model UN every year on such topics as Darfur, Kosovo, Georgia/Russia, the
North Pole... VVN is pleased to announce that from 5-8 December 2013 the 9th edition
of the MUN will be held.
A youth and student branch of the VVN was created in late 2006: **VVN Youth.** VVN Youth continued to grow and develop, and created its own structure. As of 2013 there are VVN Youth chapters at almost every Flemish university. The chapters organize lectures and events on a regular basis.

**Social Media**

VVN has its own [website](http://www.vvn.be) where activities are announced, relevant information is made available, UN and VVN news articles can be consulted, and interested visitors are invited to join the Association. Please note that currently the website is under construction. VVN invites you to visit the website on a regular basis to discover our updates.

VVN also has its own Facebook page ([https://www.facebook.com/vvn.una](https://www.facebook.com/vvn.una)) where we post information on a daily basis. Posts include UN internship vacancies, VVN events and news, UN news...

People who are interested in VVN can also follow us on our Twitter Channel (@VVN_UNAFB). Here we post short tweets, announcements, UN news...

**Visits to the UN**

VVN has organized *visits to the United Nations Offices* in New York, Geneva, Vienna, The Hague and Paris, in close cooperation with the former Brussels UNIC, the UN Department of Public Information and Belgium’s Permanent Missions to the UN.

**Co-operation with other entities**

**The UN**

VVN has traditionally enjoyed the support of, and active co-operation with, various [UN agencies](http://www.un.org) in Belgium especially with the UN’s Regional Information Centre UNRIC.

**The EU**

VVN is very much aware of the growing *role of the EU* in the UN and the UN system. It studies this role through the aforementioned interuniversity student projects and through the organization of colloquia (such as the highly successful colloquium of 18 May 2004 in the Palais d’Egmont) and lectures. VVN’s President has published widely on EU-UN matters and regularly gives seminars for EU officials active in the UN. VVN has had numerous encounters with the “Friends of the UN” working group of the European Parliament.
The Government

Relations with the Federal Government (the UN Desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the Government of Flanders (Foreign Policy Division) are mutually supportive. Senior diplomats keep VVN informed on, and discuss, Belgian UN policies. VVN has been invited to organize training sessions on UN affairs for Flemish administration officials. VVN enjoys the financial support of the Federal and Flemish Governments for specific activities and projects.

NGOs

On a regular basis VVN co-organizes lectures and seminars with a number of other NGOs, inter alia those active in the areas of human rights, development cooperation, gender issues and sustainable development. Members and Board Members are mutually invited to attend meetings and activities of special interest to them.

Other United Nations Associations

VVN maintains a close relationship with the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA). Furthermore, VVN has been an active member of the ‘EU Liaison Group’, a Group of UNAs of the Member States of the European Union, established especially to liaise with the EU.

Contact Information

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2013 ACTIVITIES

February

- 25: Lecture on Internships and working at the United Nations at HUB (Brussels) by Mw. Ria Heremans
- 26: Lecture by Mr. Dries Lesage on the post- 2015 goals (Organised by the Gent Youth Chapter)
- 27: VN promotional materials are being disseminated at the University of Antwerp annual job fair
- 28: Lecture on Internships and working at the United Nations at KHK (Geel) by Ms. Siri Robin

March

- 7: Lecture on “Flanders’ role in the international organisations at Geneva” by Ms. Julie Bynens, Flemish Representative at the multilateral organizations in Geneva (Gent) followed by a lecture on Internships and working at the United Nations by Ms. Siri Robin
- 13: Lecture on “Humanitarian Business” by Prof. Dr. Thomas G. Weiss, in cooperation with Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies (Kuleuven)
- 14: Leuven Youth Chapter raises money for Unicef through an online initiative (Unicef website)
- 15: Annual General Meeting of VN, Prof. Dr. Jan Wouters is elected as the new president
- 16/22: UNA Flanders Youth Chapters participate in the GIMUN
- 19: Debate on development issues “Fragile states: an opportunity for excelling or for waste?” in cooperation with BTC-CTB, VLIR-UOS, VAIS and VVOB (Brussels)
- 19: Lecture on Internships and working at the United Nations at KULeuven (Leuven)
- 21: Lecture on Internships and working at the United Nations at Thomas More (Antwerp)
- 26: Lecture on Internships and working at the United Nations at AUGent annual job fair + information boot with promotional materials (Gent)
- 28/06: exhibition on “Landmines Treacherous Weapons” at Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and of Military History (Brussels)

April

- 15: Lecture on “EU/UN relations and globalization by Baron Frans van Daele, organized by the Gent Youth Chapter (Gent)
- 22: Lunch colloquium at the Foreign Office, Multilateral Desk, Co- organized with APNU (Brussels)
- 26: Lecture on IODE by Mr. Peter Pissierssens (Brussels)

- 30: Lecture on Internships and working at the United Nations at UHasselt by Ms. Ria Heremans

May

- 14: NATO visit organized by the UNAFB Leuven Youth Chapter

- 24: Lunchdebate on “ Delivering as one” to celebrate the launch of the monograph “ Funds & programmes”


December

- 5/8: annual VVN MUN (Bruges)