

Witnessing Legal History at the International Law Commission

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I was fortunate to work for Professor Paparinskis as a Research Assistant at the International Law Commission of the United Nations Office (ILC) in Geneva from 25 May to 5 June 2026. This placement enabled me to engage directly with the daily work of one of the most distinguished institutions in the field of public international law. Not only was it invaluable for my legal education, but it was also highly inspiring for my future career.

As a law student, I have long been interested in public international law. Since my first year at university, I have had the chance of working as a student helper for several professors at CUHK LAW. Through these roles, I became involved in research projects concerning immigration law, anti-human trafficking law, and related subjects, where the Conventions and Treaties drafted by the International Law Commission are often an indispensable part for legal research and academic analysis. These early experiences inspired my passion for legal research, and shaped my determination to pursue a career in academia.

For this reason, I was genuinely thrilled when our Faculty announced this internship programme with the ILC. I saw it as a meaningful opportunity to deepen my understanding of public international law and to observe the work of the leading experts at close range. I was determined to strive for this invaluable opportunity, and I felt truly

honored to be selected for the programme.

The two-week internship at the ILC was indeed both fruitful and unforgettable. I arrived in Geneva on 25 May, which happened to be a public holiday in Switzerland, giving me an opportunity to briefly explore the city and become familiar with the local transportation system before beginning my placement. I cannot deny that I was nervous when I first entered the gate of the United Nations Office in Geneva and took my seat in the conference room where the 77th Session of the International Law Commission was being held. However, I was fortunate to be guided by a most patient and supportive instructor, and I was also welcomed by two friendly fellow assistants who made the experience both encouraging and enjoyable.

Before travelling to Geneva, I had imagined that the greatest challenge for me would be socialising and adapting to an unfamiliar environment. In reality, however, with the support of Professor Paparinskis and my fellow assistants, I was able to familiarise myself with the Commission's daily work very quickly. My responsibilities mainly included transcribing plenaries, drafting proposals, and subsequent discussions among the ILC members. Though my role was relatively straightforward, the work provided me with a direct understanding of how international legal texts are discussed, refined, and developed through collective deliberation.

I joined as a Research Assistant during the final two weeks of Part I of the 77 th session of the ILC. The topics under discussion involved piracy and armed robbery at sea, as well as the succession of States in respect of State responsibility. It was fascinating to observe how the world's leading legal experts from diverse jurisdictions exchanged views, debated, and worked towards common grounds on complex legal issues. I also sincerely valued the informal conversations with fellow assistants from different countries and academic backgrounds as we discussed our home countries, academic interests, and future aspirations during lunch breaks.



Yueyun (first row, first from left), Professor Paparinskis (second row, first from left), and fellow research assistants.

The most memorable moment during my placement was the final reading of the draft conclusions on the topic of succession of States in respect of State responsibility. When the Special Rapporteur completed the final reading and the Chair of the Drafting Committee announced the very end of the issue, all members of the ILC applauded in recognition of the great work by the Special Rapporteur and to celebrate the conclusion of this issue. In that moment, I was struck by the feeling that I was witnessing a small but meaningful part of legal history.

Leaving Geneva after my final day was an emotional moment. I felt sad to part with my fellow assistants and to pass through the gate of the United Nations Office for the last time. However, I know that although my internship has come to an end, the lessons I learned will remain with me for years to come. This short but meaningful experience at the ILC strengthened my belief that there is always more to discover in legal research. It reminded me to always maintain curiosity in exploring the field of public international law, and to pursue my future career with even greater passion and determination.