



*Rangita de Silva de Alwis, Associate Dean of International Affairs, University of Pennsylvania Law School- Introduction of Under- Secretary- General Miguel de Serpa Soares.*

The University of Pennsylvania Law School is delighted to partner with Perry World House, the university's new international affairs institute to welcome U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and UN Legal Counsel Miguel De Serpa Soares to a conversation with Dean Theodore W. Ruger, the Dean of our Law School.

At the start of a new year, we look back on a year of extraordinary challenges and milestones, a year when the UN celebrated its 70 birthday along with its founding charter and recommitted itself to a new development agenda, the 2030 development agenda; a year when the world adopted the first ever climate change agreement; a year when six major powers lifted sanctions against Iran in exchange for scaling back its nuclear program; a year which saw the first full and fair Burmese elections. It was also a year when sixty million people fled their countries on a perilous journey and the world faced some of the worst terrorist attacks of our age.

In his distinguished career, Under Secretary General Serpa Soares has represented his country- Portugal with great honor in various bi-lateral and multilateral fora ranging from the Council of Europe to the International Criminal Court's Assembly of States Parties.

Now as the legal counsel to the Secretary General and at the helm of the Office of Legal Affairs which provides legal services for the entire UN Organization of a staff of more than 60,000, Under- Secretary- General Serpa Soares has one of the most important jobs in the world. Given the breadth of the operations of his office it is probably the world's most prolific actor in the shaping of international law. But he has told me that he finds the deepest satisfaction in engaging with the next generation of leaders in the law.

Last year, at his own Alma Mater, the University of Lisbon's law school, he said, "I consider it as a noble part of my duties as Legal Counsel of the United Nations to go to universities to discuss with students matters of public international law at the

United Nations. Today, we thank you for ennobling Penn law school with your presence.

This evening the conversation between two leading legal thinkers will examine the role of the legal counsel, law at the United Nations and among others respond to questions on Resolution 2254, Endorsing Road Map for Peace in Syria, and Security Council Resolution 2249 calling upon states to take action against ISIS and SDG 14 on oceans and seas. And of course, the question on everyone's mind, who will be the next UN Secretary General. Will the eighth Secretary General be the first woman to take the helm of the UN?

Supporting international criminal justice and in particular the ICC, reflects one of Under Secretary General Serpa Soares' deepest personal convictions. Speaking on behalf of the Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, he have referred to this time as the "Age of accountability." As part of his mandate, he recently helped to close the Rwandan ICTR and dealt with the funding crisis of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia.

I have asked the Legal Counsel about some of the defining moments in his work. He has said that accompanying the Secretary General to Rwanda for the remembrance of the 20th anniversary of the genocide in April 2014 and visiting the genocide memorial in Kigali which is a gravesite for 250.000 victims of the genocide had a profound impact and a rededication to the founding principles of the UN.

The Under Secretary General often speaks of the sum of our "collective efforts" and has reaffirmed the importance of partnerships for a new UN. He has said that: "at the UN some ten years ago, you would not expect to see panels composed of representatives from Microsoft, Verizon, Walt Disney, Cisco, the Internet Society, UNCITRAL, IDLO (International Development Law Organization), UN Global Compact, and highly-recognized law firms all together in half a day. But this has become the trend and I believe it properly reflects the reality and the needs of the day."

In the spirit of these important partnerships, I hope you consider the University of Pennsylvania Law School as a new partner in your efforts.

Today's candid conversation is unprecedented at Penn Law. Under Secretary Serpa Soares' conversation with Dean Ted Ruger, who is one of our nation's leading administrative, constitutional and health law scholars affords the Penn community an opportunity to join in the public conversation on **What Difference Does Law at the United Nations Make?**