

INTRODUCTION

After two years of virtual meetings, we had the pleasure of hosting the first in-person Annual Meeting of the American Society of International Law since 2019 before the pandemic started. In many ways, our program reflected the uniqueness and hybridity of that moment.

As we emerged from some of the most isolating years in our memories, we felt that it was critical to design a conference that met the urgent need for connection and explored the real-world impact of international law. For that reason, as we developed our theme, we wanted to ground the conference by focusing on how international law is experienced by real people, either individually or collectively in communities or businesses. We felt that it was important to take stock of international law's on-the-ground benefits and limitations. To answer those who might be wondering "what is the relevance of international law for me?"

That focus had special resonance at the time of the conference, when all our lives had been upended and we were in the process of recalibrating the new normal in light of the global pandemic, massive economic losses, climate challenges, and persistent racial injustice. As these crises converged, the Society's Annual Meeting called on us to examine the ways that international law meets or fails to meet expectations and to explore how international law could better address these and other challenges.

To tackle such vital questions, we knew that we needed to break down the barriers that often separate the various fields of international law, so instead of the subject matter tracks of the past, we designed cross-cutting thematic tracks, asking our members to explore how the most pressing issues of our time are confronted across subject matters. We wanted to invite dialogue, collaboration, and innovation outside of the silos that typically characterize legal practice and scholarship in international law.

As Russia's invasion of Ukraine unfolded a few months before our Annual Meeting, we also knew that the annual meeting must include a late-breaking panel on the crime of aggression and the UN Charter's general prohibition on the use of force. The panel, moderated by Monica Hakimi, explored how to evaluate the effectiveness of the general prohibition on the use of force in a world where its bounds are consistently tested, as well as what role the ICC might play in preventing aggressive war in the future. Other panelists included Harold Koh (Former Legal Advisor of the U.S. Department of State), Yanar Mohammed (the Executive Director of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq), Sabeena Rajpal (Office for European Affairs at the U.S. Department of State), and Ganna Yudkivska (Judge on the European Court of Human Rights).

But the ASIL Annual Meeting is not just a crucial forum to learn and exchange ideas about international law, it is also a unique setting for reconnecting with old friends and meeting new colleagues. We wanted to create space for that too, both for those joining us in-person and online. Our goal was to facilitate connections that were unforeseen and unexpected, to make what seemed distant feel closer, and to start to envision the solutions that are needed in our new reality.

As the world reopened and we began to reconnect in person, we hope this time together inspired new collaborations, a renewed sense of purpose to our work, and most importantly hope for the future.

Thank you for joining us,

Rachel Lopez

Kish Parella

Patrick Pearsall

Co-Chairs, 2021 ASIL Annual Meeting Committee