

# **GRADUATION DAY CEREMONY**

## **Milan, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

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## Master in International Relations

By Salim Seif Kombo

Honorable Director,  
Professors, guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen of the class of 2012,

It is with great honor and humility that I stand before you today to share my experience at ASERI with you all.

I am reminded of an African proverb which states: *“A friend is someone you share the path with.”* On this day, I feel blessed to have shared this path with you all. Through all the lessons and class discussions, group work and presentations, Facebook chats and Skype calls, aperitifs and parties, I feel that you have made me a better person over this past year, and it is my sincere hope that I have left a positive impact on you as well, no matter how small. Though our journey here at ASERI is over, the friendships forged along this path will last our lifetimes. And as much as this is the end of our Masters program, in the words of Swahili proverb, *“elimu haina mwisho”*, education has no end.

In addition to all we’ve been taught in class, we must also take with us the multiculturalism of Prof. Kunhardt, the optimism of Prof. Ikenberry, the analytical thinking of Prof. Ascari, the wit of Prof. Cox and above all to remember that nobody’s perfect. Thank you Prof. Berretta. We must also remember that all we have on this Earth is precious. Yes, Prof. Radaelli, even the penguins.

We’ve indeed come a long way in a year, and we’ve had so many memorable moments in that time. I recall for instance our first teambuilding activity when we tried to build a snowman that ended up looking like a fat alien rabbit and lets not say anything about the other one we made. Our trip to Brussels was definitely the highlight, when we blocked the entrance of the NATO Headquarters for 10 minutes just to take a photo, scavenged the city to find the statue of “pipi boy” and “pipi dog” and of course looking of Adith every time he got lost.

Today, as we prepare to venture into the professional world, we face many unknowns and many life changing decisions. We all know the state of the jobs market and the level of competition. As daunting as it may seem, we must not lose hope. To put this into perspective, I would like to draw upon the experiences of two men who on this day, December 6<sup>th</sup>, in 1833 and 1956, embarked into the unknown on very different journeys that would change our understanding of the preciousness of life and the power of an idea. The first, in 1833, was Charles Darwin on HMS Beagle departed Rio de la Plata, heading for the Galapagos Islands where he would form the theory of evolution. The second, on this day in 1956, was Nelson Mandela who was arrested with 156 others for political activities in South Africa and would emerge in 1990 as South Africa’s first post-Apartheid president.

Not fearing the unknown was also one of the most important lessons I learned during the course of my internship as Programs Manager at the Pan-African Youth Union in Khartoum, Sudan, under the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps program. My experience in PYU has shown me the potential power that the youth have to create meaningful and positive change if we work together. Through the people I met in Sudan, be they refugees from

Congo and Chad or displaced persons from Darfur, I've also learned to appreciate how fortunate we all are to have made it this far in life.

I cannot end without thanking those who have helped me along the way. I'd like to thank my mother for believing in me forcing me to apply for the scholarship, even though I never believed I could ever get it, my late father for setting the bar so high, Mr. Lensen for agreeing to interview me for the scholarship even though I arrived on African time and Nadia and Elisa for all the help they've given. Without you, I wouldn't be here. I'd like to also thank everyone at Cattolica, the students and staff, for making this a wonderful experience, one I will cherish eternally.

Grazie.

# Master in International Cooperation and Development

By Vilma Westerlund

Dear Professors. Dear Colleagues.

Dear Parents. Dear Friends.

Dear Guests.

I am honored to have been asked to give this speech on behalf of our master course, the Master of International Cooperation and Development.

To have the opportunity to speak today, on our graduation day, has added meaning for me, as I am also speaking to you the 95th Independence Day celebration of my home country, Finland.

A year ago a group of strangers, we the MIC&D students from five different continents, gathered in the ASERI premises. Every one of us with very different expectations, with very different backgrounds, dreams, hopes and goals.

I myself have a tradition of writing down my personal yearly objectives. And I have been doing this for years already. Over the years my thoughts have greatly changed. New things have become important. Some sides of life less meaningful.

While working on my bachelor degree I wrote down some very concrete goals. I wanted to move in to own a nice apartment, I really hoped I could buy a new laptop, I wanted to achieve a certain number of credits and I promised to work so hard I would get a promotion or even a better job. Now looking back to that time I can see a young enthusiastic me. A person who wanted to be very independent and a person who felt she was ready for the world and the real world was ready to welcome her. Every gate was open.

And this person was very sincere. She very honestly thought that those objectives were the ones that would steer her to a happy and balanced life. And they actually did.

Today when I look back I can't say there was anything wrong with those objectives, but what I could do with the experience I have today is to advice her to add one more principle to her list.

This aim has been in the top of my list for the last years and it has greatly guided me. And this aim is to learn something from everyone around me every day! And I don't only mean a professor or a colleague, a business director or an academic but I mean everyone: you, me, everyone.

I am talking about a young child that held my hand and showed me the right way when I was totally lost between two villages in the mountainous country side of Far-West Nepal. And the farmer in the remote village in Tanzania who told me about his everyday life: I mean the rickshaw driver who explained how the immigrant workers survive on the streets of Delhi and the business man running a luxury hotel in Phnom Penh. I mean the lonely man in the local pub and I mean my friend's child who can't even talk yet. And I mean my closest friends and I mean the stranger that greets me at the metro stop every morning.

To follow this target the year in ASERI has been very unique. During our time in Milan we got to know each other well quite quickly. We began to understand the strengths and weaknesses in ourselves and each other. We very quickly learned whom we could turn to when facing challenges. We knew who had the best knowledge on different topics. We knew who had the best talent to give the presentations, who had the greatest energy, who was

the one that could patiently listen to everyone's opinions. We knew who could quickly create a strategy on how to work with a new group project or who was the one that was always able to encourage the others. And we were all important in creating the unique atmosphere we had during this year.

And this, in my opinion, is cooperation. This is development. We shared information, opinions, experiences and knowledge, we taught one another, we had amazing conversations, we agreed and we disagreed but most of all we learned. We learned that world is not black and white. We learned that there is a huge difference between information and knowledge. And we learned that in the end it is about people. The people you are working with, the people you are negotiating with, the people that share your interests and the people that do not. And to succeed in whatever we feel is important, we will need to cooperate, we will need to develop and we will need to learn with people all around us.

ASERI has given us the tools, skills and knowledge to enter the development field. All the old gates are still open, with some new ones opening all the time.

Today it is our turn to step into that world. To show the world that cooperation and development begins from the will to constantly learn. To learn from every single person around us.

I wish us all an amazing graduation day and all the best for the life-long journey of learning!

# Master Double Degree in Economics and International Policies

By Laura Negri

Professors, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends,  
Good afternoon.

When I was asked to make this speech I felt pleased and honoured. I immediately thought it was great to have the chance to give my opinion on the experience with MEPIN, but soon after I realized that up to that moment I hadn't had the time to stop and think about what actually MEPIN had globally given me and what, hopefully, would give me.

Thinking how to explain and describe what these 400 days had meant to me, I came up with a single word summarizing what this master involved. This word is *CHANGE*. In particular there are four changes I'd like to focus on.

First of all, during this master we had to *change* university, town and country.

USI and ASERI, Lugano and Milan, Switzerland and Italy: two realities that, despite being so near and appearing so similar, differ a lot. Two realities that host us, teaching us something different, leaving their mark. We studied different subjects, we lived in different contexts, we met different people and professors, but in both cases we had to adapt to a place that was not our home.

Secondly, *change* is the word at the centre of what we've studied. MEPIN enabled us to analyse the main economic and political transformations the world has been undergoing in the last decades. Thanks to the multidisciplinary approach of the Master, we've been able to see the main global problems and mechanisms from different perspectives. In this way we gained an overall vision of this ever-changing society and I really mean we didn't limit our look to a single aspect.

Thirdly, *change* certainly refers to *us*, to our personal experience, or at least this for sure applies to me.

This year has been one of the most intense, tough, dynamic, enriching and rewarding of my life. We literally had to survive to countless exams, papers and classes. Most of us have faced their first professional experience and then had to write a thesis, another one. But it goes without saying that my personal change has also and above all derived from confronting with people of different academic background, place of origin, age and future expectations. Actually I feel to have grown more in these 13 months than in the 3 previous years of university. It has been a far more enriching experience than I had expected, an experience characterized by new friendships, mutual support, misunderstandings, discoveries, arguments and achievements.

Last but not least *change* is the term that best describes our future.

For most of us this master represents the end of our academic path which means that from now on what we've been used to will disappear: no more exams, no more professors, no more secure routes to follow.

Now it's the moment to put into action what we've learnt, to carry out our projects, to make our dreams come true, to leave our home and build something belonging only to us. Now it's *our moment* and MEPIN definitely helped us to prepare for it.