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Molnár makes commitment to protecting nuclear treaty

Jessica Patchett

Editor in Chief

László Molnár is a man with vision. Born in Budapest, Hungary, Molnár reflects on his life's work thus far and finds that New York City has become his second home, and the world his office. His coworkers are leaders of the international community, presidents and prime ministers, ambassadors and leaders of multi-lateral organizations. His current task: to find among them new approaches to one of the world's most explosive issues.

Ambassador Molnár is the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Hungary to the United Nations and the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2005 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Molnár was at Elon on Friday to discuss his special PrepCom assignment with students and faculty.

"By itself, it is the mother of all treaties, which deals with all aspects of nuclear energy - peaceful and non-peaceful," Molnár said. Molnár has held several positions in Hungary's foreign ministry, one specifically overseeing the issue of non-proliferation and nuclear arms control.

Molnár's current assignment to serve PrepCom parallels the treaty's five-year cycle in which several preparatory meetings culminate in the 2005 Review Conference of the NPT. Molnár was the chairman of the second of three international reviews of the NPT last spring and he will preside as vice chairman at the last preparatory meeting April 26 in New York.

Molnár's commitment to finding solutions to problems posed by the treaty is evident in his frequent travels around the world. He said his vision for PrepCom is to strengthen the current treaty review process in light of recent events concerning Korea, Iran and other nations, he says.

"The integrity of the treaty is in danger," Molnár says, explaining that his work is urgent. His itinerary for the next year is littered with visits to various multilateral organizations, nations and groups meeting in regards to non-proliferation. Molnár's term as PrepCom chairman ends with the conference in 2005.

But Molnár's commitment to protecting and strengthening the treaty transcends the time he is assigned to PrepCom. Already, Molnár has the foresight to prepare the next chairman to continue work on this project.

"I represent the institution of memory for the



Jessica Patchett / Photographer

Dean Burbridge (right) was Laszlo Molnár's faculty host during his visit to Elon. Molnár is currently serving as the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty.

next chairman because to that time I am the caretaker," Molnár says. "Now I go to Europe to talk to NATO, then to France, then Geneva - it is a very special assignment."

Molnár takes this special assignment during his term as permanent ambassador to the U.N. in New York, which ends this year. This is Molnár's 12th year in New York, following other posts as deputy ambassador of the Republic of Hungary to the UN and Consul General of the Republic of Hungary in New York.

"It was my intention as a student to join the foreign service," says Molnár. "It came when I was 20 or so ... I consider myself extremely lucky because I have had very nice positions both abroad and in the ministry in Budapest"

Molnár's current position is one of newspaper headlines and international influence - one that Molnár appears comfortable in as he speaks calmly and intentionally about his regular tasks.

"It is a colorful and complex job because the

U.N. has a broad range of issues," he said. "My main role is to represent my country's position in each issue.

"This role is increasingly being defined by the position of the EU, but there are still many other working areas where we can represent our own national positions such as peacekeeping, conflict prevention, post conflict peacemaking, hunger, aids, development in AIDS awareness."

Molnár emphasizes his people's desire to reach the donor status in international relations.

"Up to now, we have been on the receiving side. Now we want to be on the giving side," Molnár said.

As Hungary strives to revolutionize its status as a receiving country, Molnár works to provide insight into other aspects of the Hungarian foreign ministry, such as the lifelong work of an ambassador.

"We are trying to establish a system in the foreign ministry more like that of the U.S. One that is more transparent," Molnár said.

Molnár's career in the foreign service will

come to a turning point at the end of this year following the 2005 Review Conference.

"This conference is not determining my career as such. I will most probably go back to my country and serve in the foreign ministry," Molnár says. "Budapest is my hometown and it is a beautiful place - that is where I belong to."

But Molnár has other options, as well.

"I think of leaving the foreign ministry and going to the academic life. I love to teach. I think it is a very healthy way of doing a new duty for a couple of years. If I can work this out, I can write a book and teach and then go back-like a sabbatical."

Molnár is in high demand around the world. Other international organizations have indicated that they would propose a post for Molnár.

The one sector Molnár will not consider: private business.

"I am a civil servant," he says. Molnár's history, from the time he envisioned a career in the Hungarian foreign ministry, is in international relations.

Molnár graduated from the University of Economic Sciences in Budapest 1982 and applied for a post in the ministry of foreign affairs. After taking the entry exam, Molnár was not immediately accepted and worked for a university instead as an assistant professor.

After obtaining a Ph.D. in international relations in 1989, Molnár joined the ministry and was assigned to Vienna as a member of the Hungarian Delegation to the Negotiations on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. He returned to Hungary to work in the ministry before serving in New York, where he did post-doctorate studies at the Fletcher School at Tufts University and the JFK School of Diplomacy at Harvard.

Molnár now has two children, a son, 17, who lives in Hungary, and a daughter, 21, who is studying international relations in New York.

"Perhaps she will do the same thing I am doing," Molnár says.

Although a man of vision, as a father and a world leader, Molnár often takes the role of listener and facilitator. Just as Molnár can only lead PrepCom and the 2005 review Conference of the NPT so far with proposals of what he sees and what he hears, Molnár says he will allow his daughter to choose whether she will join him in an office that spans continents.

Contact Jessica Patchett at pendulum@elon.edu or 278-7247.