The first few months of 2018, living and working in New York, have flown by. It’s been a time for learning, networking and professional development, but also for making new friends and getting comfortable navigating a life of the unfamiliar.

Throughout my internship, my time was divided between work at the IPA office, attending formal UN Commissions and events, and contributing at various NGO Committee meetings.

**Working at the United Nations**

I was given every opportunity to participate at the formal UN events as a representative of the IPA. Throughout my volunteer internship I attended the Commission for Social Development, Civil Society Forum, Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Population and Development, International Women’s Day, and International Water Day.

This opportunity has given me first-hand exposure to the ongoing role of Civil Society at the UN. In particular, the IPA’s work as a NGO, in advocating for real policy changes and cooperation between international communities, on a variety of development, social, and human rights issues.

I was fortunate to hear inspirational speakers from around the globe, promoting the progress, successes and obstacles in achieving Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (“SDGs”). My personal highlights included hearing presentations from the UN Secretary General Antonio Gutteres, Autumn Peltier (water advocate), Monica Ramirez (World Without Exploitation) and IPA volunteer intern Molly Gerke (Open the Door Foundation).

**Working on migration issues**

Having previously completed an internship with Amnesty International and volunteering as a migration agent at the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service in Queensland, it felt natural to utilise my knowledge in this area and focus on migration at the UN.

I attended the first three rounds of the negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (“the GCM”). The IPA is currently in the process of participating in mission visits as part of the NGO Committee on Migration. At these visits, the IPA and other NGOs will seek to influence the positions established by the member states in previous negotiations, to target critical areas for inclusion in the GCM, as identified by the Committee. It has been encouraging to see my work for the IPA at the UN making a real impact and that the IPA’s presence at the UN is equally critical to the work assisting vulnerable groups at a grassroots level.

**Thank you**
During my time in the Big Apple, I experienced living in the IPA community. Four generous and caring Presentation Sisters welcomed Molly and I into the Visitation House in the Bronx. Sisters Noreen, Fran, Elaine and Mary-Catherine, not only shared their home, but also stories, advice, American history, New York must-do’s, meals and prayers. I am grateful to have been living in such a safe and supportive space while away from home.

Thank you to my friends and family, in particular Joe Morrow, Mrs Dale Morrow and Sister Gabrielle Morgan, for your help in getting me to New York. Thank you, Sister Elsa, for giving me this opportunity and for your guidance and support throughout my volunteer internship. And lastly, thank you Molly for sharing this experience with me, your friendship has been an unexpected gift from this time that I will always cherish.

**Final reflection**

On return to Australia, I hope to take the skills and knowledge that I have developed, to continue assisting vulnerable groups of people and where possible, contribute to the achievement of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs from Brisbane. I admit that at this stage I don’t know what this will look like, but what I am certain about, is that I must continue to demonstrate the values I that share with the IPA in speaking and acting in partnership with others for global justice and equality for all.

Written by Amber Atkinson, Volunteer at the International Presentation Association