1.      A few sentences (1-2 paragraphs) about your reason for liaising with the Ralph Bunche Institute

I am entering the final quarter of my dissertation as PhD candidate and teaching assistant at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. Drawn by the issues of Global Governance, I applied for a scholarship as visiting scholar which I was awarded by the Swiss National Fund for Scientific Research. From August 2018, I have the privilege to concentrate fully on my research while integrating an institute known for its expertise on the study of global issues. I am excited to be able to benefit from a research environment which addresses issues in line with those I raise in my doctoral research.

2.      Your fellowship dates

My fellowship dates are the following: 1 September 2018 - 31 August 2019

3.      If you are working on a specific project while you are here, please provide a brief research overview of 1-2 pages.

Looking into civil society in international organization contexts has to be understood in a historical perspective even if its role and importance has been addressed in various theoretical ways. As an example, in 2015, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) – an agency mandated to coordinate disaster reduction among UN agencies – launched its latest program. In that context, UNISDR convened civil society to take part in meetings and negotiations to create the Sendai Framework text. In doing so, it responded to the *inclusiveness*mantra (Schwartzberg 2013) set by the United Nations (UN). Through the Major Group structure, which exists since 1992 following the Earth Summit in Rio (1992), civil society has been provided a platform to interact with Member states.

Yet how does civil society gain access? To what extent is civil society included? Who is civil society at the United Nations? How does it organize itself to influence the outcome of the text? What are its strategies? My doctoral research unravels the conditions in which civil society is included, coordinates itself and maintains relations with UN staff as Member state representatives in negotiation processes.

I answer these questions by using both qualitative methods and literatures that are not traditionally associated to the study of global institutions. Adopting an in-depth ethnography in the lead-up to a global program, and embedded as member of the Women’s Major Group, this study aims to open the UN’s black box by using on the one hand theories from interest groups literature and on the other hand, elements from the actor-network theory. As a result I suggest to put the text at the center of the research. This endeavor allows to follow the actors in the creation process of an international text and sheds light on the UN’s apparatus while at the same time describing the people that are involved. While borrowing the *influence production process (IPP)*concept (Lowery and Gray 2004), I highlight various moments which enable the Women’s Major Group to gain access to the disaster risk reduction negotiation process. IPPtakes into account 4 stages. It addresses the mobilization of individuals organized according to their interests, pins the interactions within the system toward influence strategies, emphasizes on the actual influence strategies and finally shows the consequences for policy outcome. I thus give an account of the people who are present in the process, their background, knowledge and contribution together with the means at their disposal and the relations they maintain with the UN. To date, authors have pointed to several characteristics NGOs rely on to enhance chances for influence such as information provision, access, resources, interactions and public opinion (Tallberg et al. 2015).

From a case study, this work fits into present research and debates regarding the UN’s democratic process and legitimizing tools. In a context where the UN organization constantly seeks legitimization “to remain central to the effective maintenance of international society” (Roberts and Kinsbury in Barnett 1997) the need for inclusiveness beyond Member States has become ever more important. The organization draws its narrative from the democratic principle linked to peace and security and claims to be an organization that approximates universality and some degree of moral authority through the support and investment of states (Barnett 1997). The “inclusiveness” — witnessed by a growing visibility of NGOs and civil society in international fora (Sasson 2002) — goes in line with the need to maintain its legitimacy to deal effectively with the manifold challenges of the twenty-first century (Schwartzberg 2013:179).

This research thus aims to take a theoretical stance in exploring the UN’s black box by focusing on civil society and its involvement in UN negotiation processes. I give cues to understand to what extent civil society actually is awarded access in international decision-making fora.

4.      Please give us a list of your most relevant publications

**Kimber, Leah**, “Resilience from the United Nations' Standpoint: The Challenges of Vagueness". *Submitted*

**Kimber, Leah**and Lucile Martens, “Understanding the United Nations as a Hyperspace”. *Work in progress*

**Kimber, Leah**and Jackie Steele. “Gendering Disaster Risk Reduction in United Nations’ negotiations”. *Submitted to the International Journal of Disaster Risk Science.*

5.      A link to the homepage of your home university/ department

[http://unige.ch/sciences-societe/socio/fr/bienvenue/[unige.ch]](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__unige.ch_sciences-2Dsociete_socio_fr_bienvenue_&d=DwMGaQ&c=8v77JlHZOYsReeOxyYXDU39VUUzHxyfBUh7fw_ZfBDA&r=rJzPRP_lvq1o1sT3SMtoahJTWatU6Kq9gLMFguKfOv4&m=fFZTxkdPc5ICLQ5POOXDNmG1j5o_hsT3gZP4KMt-JTY&s=x2Iy6Ksg_qURvyfXz4oTdYaTIz3ozy0-32RpEgMD8uM&e=)