

Vivian Kawanami, graduated in Human Rights and Humanitarian Action



Vivian Kawanami has graduated from the Master in Human Rights and Humanitarian Action. Coming from Brazil, she is the co-founder and co-president of the Conférence pour le Brésil.

What is your role and main responsibilities?

At the [Conférence Pour le Brésil](#), I am one of the co-founders and co-president in charge of Operations. The Conférence was born as a student initiative at Sciences Po last year and it recently became a recognised association at Sciences Po Paris. Our goal is to bring more information about Brazil to our fellow students and alumni, and in 2020 we shall discuss the 2030 Agenda and how to overcome inequalities in our country.

My main responsibilities are ensuring the logistics of our now-online conference are correct by managing a team of three fellow sciences-pistes, Gabriela CAMPOS FURTADO, Ariela HALPERN, and Tara NELSON. Secondly, I am also in charge of the oversight of the entire conference, a task I share with my fellow co-presidents Felipe LAURITZEN and Vinicius REIS. Finally, I am also responsible for the organization of four panels: Gender Equality, Structural Racism, Black Activism, and Access to Health.

How did you secure this role?

My role as co-president is mainly due to the fact that I am one of the founders of this initiative at Sciences Po Paris. However, my previous work experiences leading student organisations in Brazil and organising events in France were certainly helpful to preside the conference. These allowed me to understand how to divide responsibilities, develop collective projects democratically, and to deal with French bureaucracy effectively.

When you were at PSIA, did you picture yourself working in France or abroad?

When I started my studies at PSIA, my first thought was to work in MENA, the region I chose as regional concentration. This choice was due to the fact I had a previous working experience in the region as a volunteer in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2016. However, my third-semester internship was based in Paris: I was in charge of leading a congressional advocacy initiative at the [Assemblée Nationale](#) aimed at raising awareness on Human Rights violations happening in Bahrain. I did learn a lot about Bahrain and French politics during my internship. However, after being exposed to the importance of freedom of speech, assembly, and association, I understood I had to once again be vocal about inequalities in Brazil, my country of origin. Positive change towards the respect of Human Rights demands action, be it local or internationally as threats and achievements are not border-restricted.

What was it like to adjust to a French working environment?

Although I have worked in France, I never felt that I was working at a “French environment”: my colleagues and supervisors were always quite international. The major difficulty I felt was how to coordinate work with offices located in different regions: being mindful of time-zones, working-hours, and changes such as daylight-saving time are key. In this sense, implementing productivity tools such as Trello and Slack has helped the organisation of the Conférence Pour le Brésil a lot.

What is the most fascinating and/or surprising aspect at your role?

The most fascinating aspect of my work as co-president is meeting my idols, people I have long admired due to their activism, academic production, actions, and words. Just to name a few, my role has allowed me to talk with Ms. Débora Diniz (famous anthropologist, feminist, and the leader of the legal process that allowed abortion in some cases in 2012) and with Ms. Sueli Carneiro (philosopher, feminist, and one of the most important activists that notoriously defends the rights of black women in Brazil).

In addition to this, my role has also allowed me to learn more about Economics, Brazilian Politics, and about organising online events. The latter is explained due to the fact the conference was to take place in our Amphi Boutmy in April, but our plan had to be changed due to the pandemic. Switching to an online format has also brought some benefits to our organisation as more people can access our content and, hopefully, take action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

How did your PSIA experience help you with the role?

The experience I had at PSIA and that has certainly helped me with my role was the level of rigour applied to written work. Attention to details and how to communicate a certain message were skills I developed through my essays and that proved to be quite important when contacting former ministers, academics, politicians, and the like. Secondly, my two years at PSIA helped me improve my risk analysis skills, an asset that has contributed to decision-making in critical steps of managing the conference.

What advice would you give to others?

My advice to anyone who's reading my profile is to believe in the power of student projects, roll-up the sleeves, and engage in these initiatives. In the beginning they may seem tiny in scope or in impact, but achieving bigger results is something that demands time, effort, and patience. I know most young graduates like me are eager to join famous organisations and change the world now, but it's important to remember that every local action has an impact. So I do encourage fellow students to launch initiatives at Sciences Po and outside its walls, question reality, propose new paths, and advocate for the world you want to live in. You will be morally rewarded for following your dreams and by the job-market as well since recruiters do seem to appreciate civic engagement.

- [Master in Human Rights and Humanitarian Action](#)
- [About the Conférence Pour le Brésil](#)