

## CHAPTER IV.

# THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

All delegations are represented on the Concurrent General Assembly Plenary and each Committee of the General Assembly. Two topics will be discussed in each Committee, as listed below. Any resolutions passed on these topics will be automatically submitted to the Combined General Assembly Plenary session on the last day of the conference for final approval. To allow all Representatives an equal opportunity for preparation, resolutions will only be accepted on the topics listed in this handbook. No new topics will be accepted in the General Assembly.

The General Assembly is the main, deliberative, policy-making body of the United Nations and is empowered to address all international issues covered by the UN Charter. In many ways it acts as the “central hub” of the United Nations. Many of the other main bodies report to the General Assembly, but not all of these are subsidiary. For example, the Security Council provides the General Assembly with a report on its work, but it is an independent body; its work does not need to be approved. In contrast, ECOSOC is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, which means that the General Assembly can provide them with a mandate. Other subsidiary bodies, such as UNDP and UNICEF, also have direct reporting relationships with the General Assembly.

Each of the Main Committees of the General Assembly are assigned specific tasks and topics to discuss during the session. Since all Member States are seated on each of these Committees, it is important to note that the topics of discussion usually do not overlap, or when they do each Committee is responsible for discussion of a very specific area within that topic. Participants in each Committee should take care to not expand the discussion of their topic in a direction that would normally be discussed by another Committee. As an example, the Sixth Committee might discuss a topic that deals with the legal issues faced by states in alleviating poverty and improving the legal climate in each state, but this Committee would not discuss the broader topic. A full treatment of the poverty topic would be left to the Third Committee or more likely to ECOSOC.

AMUN will not be simulating Fifth Committee, but financial questions should still be considered during Committee deliberations. While financing decisions are made in Fifth Committee, other Committees generally won't act unless they know that funding is available for their proposals. In addition, the Fifth Committee only makes financing decisions that concern the UN regular budget, not those dealing with voluntary contributions or new outlays. Therefore, if one of the General Assembly Committees creates a new program or initiative, that Committee should specify how that program can be funded.

A brief description of each Committee simulated at AMUN is provided along with the background research for that Committee, along with the Committee's web page link.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

### THE CONCURRENT GENERAL ASSEMBLY PLENARY

**PURVIEW OF THIS SIMULATION:** The General Assembly Plenary typically considers issues that cross over the mandates of several different Committees and would not be adequately addressed by allocating separate aspects of the issue to each Committee. The General Assembly Plenary is also responsible for coordinating work between many different bodies of the United Nations. For example, while the General Assembly is responsible under the UN Charter for peace and security, the Security Council is given primary responsibility for this task. This generally means that when the Security Council is discussing an aspect of international peace and security, the General Assembly will cease deliberating on the topic and defer to the Security Council.

More information is available on-line at: [www.un.org/ga/60/plenary/index.html](http://www.un.org/ga/60/plenary/index.html)

#### **SUPPORT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE AND CONSOLIDATE NEW OR RESTORED DEMOCRACIES**

As authoritarian governments began to falter in the mid-1980s, many emerging nations turned toward democracy as the preferred method of governance. The concern of many new or restored democracies is that democracy is not just affected by internal issues, but also influenced by forces that are outside of their control. These include market forces, globalization, and terrorism, and are often larger obstacles than those presented within a nation to democratic processes. Learning how to operate as a democracy also presents a challenge, in which civil society can play a helpful role by educating the public and reinforcing the necessary trust in the democratic institutions that govern. Realizing that a true change in government requires external sup-

port in addition to internal changes, thirteen nations met in Manila, the Philippines in 1988, at the First International Conference on New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD). Along with recognizing the struggles that new or restored democracies faced, the members of the conference also pointed to the link between peace and development. As the interest grew in the democratic movement, a Second ICNRD was held in Managua, Nicaragua in 1994. There, states formed a Plan of Action for democracy and pushed for a permanent item to be included on the General Assembly agenda regarding developing democracies. Subsequent ICNRDs in 1997 and 2000 further defined the commitment to democracy while recognizing the diversity of the regions where new or restored democracies are found.

In 2003, the Fifth and largest ICNRD was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The two major documents which emerged from Ulaanbaatar focused on providing new or restored



democracies with templates for the evaluation of current democratic processes and institutions and the evolution of these into more stable, participatory democracies. The Ulaanbaatar Declaration created a clear and agreed upon definition of democracy, with basic tenants that all new or restored democracies could strive towards. Some of these include being just and responsible; promoting and protecting the rights and freedoms of all their members; and being open and transparent. The Plan of Action identified ways of implementing this definition at the local, national, regional and international levels, both within and outside the UN system. Prior to the Sixth ICNRD in Doha, Qatar, states were encouraged to compile country information notes, which would analyze the current democratic situation and provide a list of strengths, areas of concern, and potential solutions to difficulties the country faced in creating a robust democracy. It was suggested that these evaluations take place at the local and national levels as a way of allowing for cultural diversity in the democratic process. Regional organizations were encouraged to create similar plans of action, with which they might provide increased institutional and societal support for the new or restored democracies. On the international level, the Plan of Action called for further conferences and discussion to facilitate the flow of ideas and vision between established democracies and new or restored democracies. The final report from Ulaanbaatar also encouraged the General Assembly to continue its support for new or restored democracies by supporting the follow-up mechanisms and conferences.

As momentum in the democratic movement has grown, so too has the depth and breadth of the type and style of democratic government and what these new governments are expected to provide to their citizens. As the international community prepares for the Sixth ICNRD in Qatar, new or restored democracies still face many of the same struggles of two decades ago: balancing their citizens' safety and freedoms; promoting and stabilizing democracy in the face of globalization and terrorism; and educating citizens to operate within a democracy. The Sixth ICNRD will focus on the implementation of the plan of action, how the changing global environment affects new or restored democracies, and what the international system, including the UN, can do to help to promote these democracies.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- Does your government view democracy as an important goal for all countries to pursue?
- Has your government been an active participant in the International Conferences on New or Restored Democracies?
- Are the mechanisms for follow-up from the Fifth ICNRD sufficient? What else is needed?
- What cultural and social conditions can assist action on these matters? What actions can be promoted by the international community to better support these democracies?

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Prezowski, Adam, *Democracy and Development: What We Know and What We Do Not*, Paper Commissioned for the Fifth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies; 2003.

## UN Documents:

A/52/334 - Bucharest Progress Review and Recommendations

A/49/713 - Managua Declaration

A/43/538 - Manila Declaration

A/RES/60/162

A/RES/59/201

A/RES/58/281

A/RES/58/13

A/RES/52/18 - Bucharest Final Report

Cotonou Declaration

Cotonou Final Report

Ulaanbaatar Declaration

Ulaanbaatar Plan of Action

Ulaanbaatar Final Report

## Additional Web Resources:

[www.icnrd5-mongolia.mn](http://www.icnrd5-mongolia.mn) - ICNRD 5 (2003)

[www.icsfd.org](http://www.icsfd.org) - International Civil Society Forum for Democracy  
[www.icsfd.org/icsf-2003.html](http://www.icsfd.org/icsf-2003.html) - International Civil Society Forum 2003

[www.icnrd5-mongolia.mn/parl.htm](http://www.icnrd5-mongolia.mn/parl.htm) - Parliamentarians' Forum 2003

[www.un.org/events/democracies.htm](http://www.un.org/events/democracies.htm) - ICNRD 4 (2000)

## ENHANCING CAPACITY-BUILDING IN GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH

The international community is becoming increasingly aware of the importance of public health in peace and development goals. Communicable diseases like malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis present tremendous burdens to both the developing world and the international community. Every year nearly 11 million children die from preventable diseases and another 11 million children are orphaned by HIV/AIDS. True development cannot be achieved without a healthy population. A strong public health system at both the national and international level will be necessary to reduce human morbidity and mortality, which in turn will create opportunities for progress.

The spread of drug resistant tuberculosis and the reemergence of diseases such as polio indicate that public health capacity has been declining in recent years. Capacity building for global public health involves programs to develop infrastructure and human skill in order to reduce risk. A fully developed public health infrastructure will need to have the capacity for surveillance, early detection and diagnosis of, timely communication about, and rapid response to a range of infectious diseases. While primary responsibility for public health activities lies with mem-



ber states, public health systems in developing countries can easily become overwhelmed during public emergencies, when international assistance is required.

The United Nations has a long history with developing public health capacity with primary responsibility delegated to the World Health Organization (WHO). The International Health Regulations (IHR), which were adopted in 1969, deal with the reporting and containment of infectious diseases and are the foundation for public health at the international level. The IHR create the framework for the WHO Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). The GOARN, set up in 1997 and formalized in 2000, brings together member states and technical partners and contributes to global public health by fighting the international spread of disease, providing technical assistance to affected states, and developing long-term epidemic preparedness and capacity building. The GOARN has over 120 partners worldwide and is able to identify and respond to outbreaks in the developing world. During the SARS epidemic in 2003, the GOARN was tested for the first time against a virus spreading rapidly across international borders.

In addition to the work done by the WHO, the General Assembly has addressed capacity building for global public health. The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, adopted in 2000, contain health related goals of combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, and improving maternal and child health. The report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change from the follow-up to the Outcome of the Millennium Summit makes specific recommendations regarding public health capacity. The High level Panel called for a renewed commitment to rebuilding local and national public health systems in the developing world and called for WHO member states to provide greater resources to strengthen the GOARN.

In addition to receiving the report from the High Level Panel, the General Assembly passed resolution 60/35, which specifically addresses capacity building for public health. The resolution stressed the need for states to integrate public health into social and economic development plans and for developed countries to invest in programs to improve developing states' public health systems. Public systems are recognized as being critical to development and efforts to strengthen capacity building in public health will in turn drive social and economic development. The resolution also focuses on the role of the international community in global public health through the open exchange of information, training and research into disease surveillance, prevention, control and treatment, and vaccine development. Finally, Resolution 60/35 acknowledges the importance of public health capacity in disaster response and recovery and encourages member-states to develop such response plans.

In May 2005, an updated version of the IHR was adopted by the World Health Assembly, which goes into effect on 15 June 2007. Included in the new revision are definitions of core capacities that states must develop, strengthen and maintain in order to respond to real and potential public health risks. It also expands the scope of the IHR by including reporting requirements for existing, new, and re-emerging diseases and will include provisions for public health events not caused by an infectious agent.

With the looming threat of pandemic influenza and the increasing acknowledgement of the role public health plays in peace and development, the global community has never been more committed to capacity building in global public health. If this commitment can be sustained the world has an unprecedented opportunity to achieve health for all.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- What can the United Nations do to promote the development of global public health?
- What is the role of the state in developing public health capacity? What is the role of the international community in developing public health capacity?
- How can public health capacity be used to drive development?
- What critical public health infrastructure is your country is lacking?
- How can your country assist others in achieving their health goals?

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A/59/565  
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WHA 56.29  
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WHA 54.14  
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#### *Additional Web Resources:*

- [www.globalhealth.org](http://www.globalhealth.org) - Global Health Council
- [www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu](http://www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu) - The Earth Institute
- [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) - The World Health Organization
- [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) - U.S Department of Health and Human Services Pandemic Influenza Website
- [www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_health/home/News/news\\_items/avian\\_influenza.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/home/News/news_items/avian_influenza.html) - USAID Avian Influenza Response
- [www.cdc.gov/ogh](http://www.cdc.gov/ogh) - CDC Coordinating Office for Global Health



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## THE FIRST COMMITTEE: DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

**PURVIEW OF THIS SIMULATION:** The General Assembly First Committee addresses issues related to the disarmament of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. The First Committee can also make recommendations on the regulations of these weapons as they relate to international peace and security. The First Committee does not address legal issues surrounding weapons control or complex peace and security issues addressed by the Security Council.

More information is available on-line at: [www.un.org/ga/60/first/](http://www.un.org/ga/60/first/)

### CONVENTIONAL ARMS CONTROL AT THE REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL LEVELS

The General Assembly's primary goal set forth in 1945 was to avert another global conflict such as World War II by providing a basis for international discourse rather than armed conflict. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the topic of conventional arms control at regional and subregional levels has gained considerable momentum. In the past fifteen years the threat of global conflict has diminished greatly. Now however, the most probable scenario for an armed conflict is that of warfare confined to a regional theater. Thus conventional arms control is ideally addressed in the same scope.

In past UN endeavors, the First Committee has encouraged the usage of regional organizations in a number of different arms control issues. The UN has also instituted a number of different Regional Centres on Peace and Disarmament in regions such as Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and in Africa. These centers have been used to promote transparency—as weapons collection points, arms registers, and educational facilities. While the resolutions on this topic in the past have pushed for increased involvement in regional and subregional efforts, they have lacked a more cohesive and detailed framework needed to improve the situation overall.

In recent years a great deal of emphasis has been put on weapons of mass destruction and regional agreements on nuclear non-proliferation and the like. This emphasis has effectively created what some believe to be a blind spot in regard to conventional weapons. Although strides have been made in certain areas within the conventional arms category, including those in landmines and small and light weapons, the developing world is accumulating conventional arms at a disturbing rate. Some 60% of the conventional arms bought can be attributed to the developing world.

There are several possible routes the United Nations could take to improve the regional and subregional arms control efforts. In many cases the criteria for control mechanisms on import and export, as well as that of checks and balances, vary widely from region to region. An established set of suggested criteria or a model is needed to truly gain a clear view of the global situation. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe establishes many detailed guidelines for vehicle deployments and equipment quantities in any given subregion or state which could serve as a model.

Elective, voluntary observations of conventional weaponry and movements could also be an option for the United Nations to explore in their appeal for regional conventional arms control. Not only would this serve as a means of insuring mutual compliance, but could also contribute as a confidence-building measure. Without mutual trust in the intentions of states' respective regional counterparts, a regional effort at arms control would ultimately prove fruitless.

An effort has been made to track the import and export of arms at a global level, using the UN Arms Registrar. However, this effort has been hampered by the scope of the weapons reported and the global politics involved in arms control issues. Regions such as Africa could benefit from the inclusion of smaller arms imports and exports being tracked. Given the interests of larger arms producers in the global politics of these matters, it is ideal for regions to develop their own sets of regulations and methods for tracking and cooperation in these matters.

In terms of the options to the First Committee in considering conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, there are a number of areas to take into account. High amongst them are the finances involved in such regional efforts and how to incite nations to move forward with regional cooperation. As the developing world currently accounts for a large portion of spending on conventional weapons, it would seem that ideally they should also be encouraged to develop or utilize existing regional organizational structures to address the growing arms problems. However, the greater challenge is in convincing these nations to commit any capital toward this endeavor.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- What is the status of conventional arms control in your region?
- What modifications to current control efforts could be made to cater to your regions specific needs?
- How can nations be encouraged to take part in regional efforts to control conventional arms?
- What role can developed nations play in conventional arms control, especially with regard to that of the developing world?

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A/53/344  
A/RES/48/75  
A/RES/47/52  
A/RES/46/36  
A/RES/45/58  
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#### *Additional Web Resources:*

[disarmament.un.org/cab/register.html](http://disarmament.un.org/cab/register.html) - UN Disarmament Organization's Register of Conventional Arms

[www.iansa.org](http://www.iansa.org) - International Action Network on Small Arms

[disarm.igc.org/conv-home.php](http://disarm.igc.org/conv-home.php) - NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace, and Security

### **MEASURES TO PREVENT TERRORISTS FROM ACQUIRING WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**

During the Cold War, powers on both sides of the arms race stockpiled weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including nuclear, biological, and chemical agents, in an effort to deter the other side from launching an attack. Although provisions were made following the conclusion of the Cold War to destroy some of these stockpiles, the breakup of the Soviet Union caused large quantities of these weapons of mass destruction to enter into the possession of several newly-independent states. Poor economic conditions in these states resulted in many of these stockpiles not receiving adequate maintenance or protection, which in turn prompted international concerns of the possibility of terrorists purchasing these materials on the black market.

For much of its history, the United Nations has not focused specifically on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. This is not to say that the issue of terrorism has been neglected by the UN; rather, the focus has been on preventing terrorism in a broad sense. In 1996, General Assembly resolution 51/210 established an Ad Hoc Committee to consider legal aspects of the suppression of terrorist bombings. More recently, this committee has evolved to also confront the threat of nuclear terrorism through the creation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism; the convention remains open for signature through December

2006. The acquisition of nuclear materials by terrorists has also been addressed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in resolution GC(47)/RES/8 of their General Conference in 2003. This resolution called for the creation of an agency within the IAEA to advise the agency in areas of nuclear security.

Since its 57th session, the General Assembly has considered the issue of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction. The UN actively encourages international cooperation in preventing the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists. The Secretary-General has also been charged with compiling a report on the relationship between the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

More recently, the UN affirmed and encouraged a number of regional and sub-regional efforts to prevent the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists. Specifically, it affirmed the actions taken by organizations such as the Thirteenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of Eight, the European Union, and the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in their deliberations on how to effectively curtail the threat of weapons of mass destruction in the context of terrorism.

While a great deal of international focus has been placed on the threat of nuclear terrorism, some groups also express concern over the possibility of chemical or biological agents being used in a future terrorist attack. While experts argue that terrorists lack the logistic abilities to effectively execute such an attack, others argue that the 1995 release of sarin gas in a Tokyo subway proves the feasibility of such an attack elsewhere.

Debate continues as to the best methods of preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Secretary-General Kofi Annan recently remarked that any policy on the issue of terrorism must be based on five pillars, including: an aim to dissuade people from resorting to terrorism or supporting it; denying terrorists access to funds and materials; deterring states from sponsoring terrorism; developing state capacity to defeat terrorism; and the defense of human rights. However, a consensus on the matter does not currently exist as to the regulations of WMDs or how best to keep them out of terrorist hands.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- Does your country currently possess nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons? If so, what safeguards are currently in place?
- What guidelines can the First Committee set down for the security of the existing WMD facilities and their transport?
- Is it in your nation's interest to focus on the specific issue of preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, or would your state's interests be better served considering terrorism in a broader context?
- Are there differences between the approach to preventing terrorists from acquiring chemical or biological weapons and the approach to preventing the acquisition of nuclear weapons?

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IAEA Documents:  
GC(45)/RES/14  
GC(47)/RES/8

*Additional Web Resources:*

[www.un.org/terrorism](http://www.un.org/terrorism) - UN Action Against Terrorism  
[www.un.org/sc/ctc](http://www.un.org/sc/ctc) - Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee  
[www.iaea.org/index.html](http://www.iaea.org/index.html) - International Atomic Energy Agency  
[www.nti.org](http://www.nti.org) - The Nuclear Threat Initiative

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## THE SECOND COMMITTEE: ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL

**PURVIEW OF THIS SIMULATION:** The General Assembly Second Committee makes recommendations on means to improve the economic development of Member States and maintains the stability of the international financial and trade network. The economic issues considered by the Second Committee are distinguished from those considered by the Fifth Committee in that they deal solely with financing the economic assistance to member states. The Second Committee does not address social issues which impact development; these are considered by the Third Committee.

More information is available on-line at: [www.un.org/ga/60/second/](http://www.un.org/ga/60/second/)

### NATURAL DISASTERS AND VULNERABILITY

The incidence of natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions has been steadily increasing. And while there has been an overall decline in annual deaths due to disasters, 200 million people are affected by disasters every year and the economic costs associated with disasters are higher than ever. Disasters can strike any country – developing and developed – but developing countries are particularly susceptible; the risks of disasters are strongly linked to environmental problems and issues necessary for sustainable development. However, it is not that the natural hazards such as earthquakes and floods themselves always lead to disasters. Disasters occur when hazards strike vulnerable populations.

Vulnerability to disasters arises from such issues as social and economic conditions, unplanned urbanization, development in high-risk zones, and environmental degradation and scarcity. Poverty contributes to vulnerability by forcing people to live in geographically unsafe locations and inadequate shelters. Natural disasters that threaten vulnerable communities are in many ways also a development challenge because they can incapacitate already limited social and economic infrastructures. Given that social, economic and environmental factors all contribute to vulnerability, sustainable development, poverty reduction, and disaster risk reduction policies can and should be mutually supportive activities.

Recognizing the impact of and concern surrounding natural disasters, the General Assembly declared 1990 – 1999 to be the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). As part of this effort, the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction convened in Yokohama, Japan in 1994. The outcome of this meeting, The Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World, provided landmark guidance on decreasing both

the risk from, and the impact of, natural hazards at both the national and international level. The foundation of the Yokohama Strategy is the belief that, in most cases, natural phenomena are beyond human control, but vulnerability is largely a result of human activity. The Yokohama Strategy was endorsed at the Programme Forum on the International Decade held 5 – 9 July, 1999 in Geneva where the Geneva Mandate on Disaster Reduction was adopted.

In 2000, at the end of the IDNDR, the General Assembly created the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) in order to continue the momentum in disaster reduction programmes generated by the IDNDR. One of the major strategic goals of the ISDR has been to incorporate the physical and socio-economic dimensions of vulnerability into the broader understanding of disaster risk management. To this end, the ISDR has advocated for the integration of policies addressing disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, and environmental protection programs.

In addition to the creation of the ISDR, the General Assembly established two mechanisms to implement the ISDR: the Inter-Agency Secretariat and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction. The Inter-Agency is a forum for developing and disseminating protocols and policies for reducing risk and vulnerability. The Inter-Agency Secretariat coordinates programs for disaster reduction and ensures concurrence between disaster reduction programmes and humanitarian and development efforts. The General Assembly has called upon member states to develop national platforms for disaster risk reduction which would be supported by the ISDR and can be instruments for implementing the ISDR at the national and community level.

The General Assembly convened a second World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005. The purpose of the Conference was to evaluate progress made in disaster risk reduction since the



1994 Conference and to develop a framework for action for the next ten years. The Conference, held in Kobe, Japan, adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005 – 2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. The key priorities of the Hyogo Framework are: (1) ensure disaster risk reduction is a national priority with an institutional basis for implementation, (2) identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning, (3) use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels, (4) reduce the underlying risk factors, (5) strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels of government. Because these goals look at all levels of government—from a country's educational and cultural system to its basic services and disaster preparedness, there is a great deal of work ahead. Infrastructure and monitoring capabilities vary wildly across the world, and it is always difficult for countries to place a priority on preparing for the possibility of future disasters while they may face issues of political strife, poverty, or a multitude of other problems today.

A multifaceted approach that addresses both hazards of natural and environmental origin and the relationship between the two will have an impact on socioeconomic and environmental systems. Moreover, this approach will complement sustainable development programs already in existence. Disaster risk reduction must be simultaneously addressed as both a humanitarian and development issue. Continuing support from communities, all levels of government, international and regional organizations, and the scientific and technical communities will be vital to achieve and maintain success.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- What is the relationship between disaster risk reduction programs, sustainable development programs and humanitarian assistance?
- What are the economic benefits to disaster risk reduction programs?
- What are the links between poverty and disasters?
- How can developing countries be encouraged to invest in disaster risk reduction programs?

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### Additional Web Resources:

[www.unisdr.org](http://www.unisdr.org) - International Strategy for Disaster Reduction  
[www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org) - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
[ochaonline.un.org](http://ochaonline.un.org) - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

### WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

Since its inception, one of the United Nations primary concerns has been the facilitation of development throughout the world. Promoting gender equality and ensuring the prominent role of women in development continues to be one of the most difficult topics to address in the area of development worldwide. Without ensuring the equal rights of women, and thus their equal status in society, there is little hope of women's participation in the development of their countries. In addition, there is no hope for true development within a country while half of its citizens remain without equal rights, education, health care, or largely remain in poverty.

Despite a multitude of unanimously adopted resolutions, treaties, and accords, many critics still claim that little to no progress has been made on international women's rights, and specifically the role of women in development. This topic covers not only the possibility for women to assist in development efforts, but also their rights and protections within developing countries. Issues such as the trafficking of women and girls and violence towards women and girls in developing countries are difficult to address, though the UN has attempted to do so. The General Assembly has recognized that the lack of development contributes to these problems. For example, poor families are unable to educate their daughters because they are needed to help with household chores and feeding the family.

Education is another important issue that directly affects the role of women in development. Education contributes to a state's chances for economic growth and development, but is often provided disparately to men and women. With the continuing onslaught of HIV/AIDS, education in the realm of reproductive health has joined the need for education on women's basic human rights, along with the continuing need for improved standard elementary education programs for women. All of these are increasingly important in promoting the development of countries. Without the education of women in these areas, least developed countries face not only the continued growth of



the HIV/AIDS crisis, but without basic education, women have little hope in being active and productive members in their state's development as parents, educators, professionals, business owners, or politicians.

In addition, more and more women are recognized as the main providers for their families throughout the world. This shift is sometimes due to a change in the cultural recognition of a woman's economic worth, but in the developing world is increasing a result when faced with the economic reality of the loss of a partner due to death or war. In either case, education becomes key to ensure that women can not only provide for their households, but also be productive, contributing members of their societies.

The UN has taken several important actions to promote the role of women in development. As part of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Fourth World Conference on Women outlined goals for achieving gender equality and declared that steps be taken to ensure the safe and beneficial development for both men and women. In the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the General Assembly laid out the key areas and goals to be met in the area of development. While only one of the eight MDGs specifically deal with women in development, the remaining seven are key to the development process and provide an excellent framework for how women can be involved in the development process. The UN also encourages member states to create political environments where women enjoy full and equal access to participate in decision-making, policy-formation, and implementation. It is important to include a gender perspective in existing policies and programs to ensure that women remain a top priority for the international community. In its 60th Session, the General Assembly again addressed the issue by calling on countries to promote gender equality in the spheres of education, business, and political life, and ensure a gender perspective be maintained in a states development plan. By committing to the education of women and girls, member states can help meet the MDGs and make the first steps toward gender equality. And by opening up their political systems to women—both with suffrage and by allowing them to stand for office, it can allow that gender perspective is maintained throughout the society.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- What is the international community's role in fostering the role of women in development?
- How does implementation of the Beijing Declaration, the MDG, and other international treaties affect your country?
- What is the status of women and girls in your country, and what programs are being developed to ensure their equality?
- How can developing countries be encouraged to mainstream women in their societies, as well as in the programs they implement for development?

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Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development, and Peace for the 21st Century

## Additional Web Resources:

[www.awid.org](http://www.awid.org) - Association for Women's Rights in Development

[www.focusintl.com](http://www.focusintl.com) - Focus International, includes statistics on Women in Development

[www.refwid.org](http://www.refwid.org) - Refugee Women in Development

[www.cwds.org](http://www.cwds.org) - Center for Women's Development Studies





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## THE THIRD COMMITTEE: SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND CULTURAL

**PURVIEW OF THIS SIMULATION:** The General Assembly Third Committee addresses all social, humanitarian and cultural issues in the General Assembly. Often overlapping in areas of concern with other organs within the United Nations, the Third Committee discusses with, recognizes reports of, and submits recommendations to the GA in coordination with organs such as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

More information is available on-line at: [www.un.org/ga/60/third/](http://www.un.org/ga/60/third/)

### THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Although individual rights have traditionally been viewed as socio-political issues, the effects of globalization have created an understanding that development issues are also inextricably tied with the dignity and self-determination of all peoples. Particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDC's), the results of development efforts, or the lack thereof, profoundly impact the cultural, social, political, and economic well-being of a country's citizens. The right to development also holds significance for developed nations due to increasing interdependence and a mutual interest in promoting stability around the world.

The General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Right to Development on December 4th, 1986. The related Resolution, 41/128, identified national and international goals that had to be met to fulfill this Right. Goals for states include the strengthening of democracy and civic institutions, the protection of the rights of the individual, and just access to resources by all citizens. International efforts include debt relief and the restructuring of international trade to adhere to the requirements of the rights to development. Since 1996 the UN has organized seven Working Groups on the Right to Development ("Working Group") meetings, which have discussed the methods of instituting reforms, and the need to streamline various Human Rights efforts within the United Nations. Unfortunately, due mainly to resistance from some Western nations progress was slow, as some questioned whether the right to development should be considered a human right on par with others espoused in the Declaration of Human Rights. Western nations as a whole appeared worried that creating international laws based upon theories of a right to development would force reforms upon wealthier states, rather than allowing them to enact changes voluntarily.

However, there has been a lot of progress over the past 6 years. Advocates of the right to development have focused on working within the framework of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Specifically, Goal 8 of the Millennium Goals places a primacy on the creation of global partnerships for the development of poorer nations. Goal 8 has now become a crucial component in discussion of right to development issues.

In 2004, the Commission on Human Rights passed resolution 2004/7, establishing a long sought after High-Level Task Force on the Implementation of the Right to Development ("Task Force") to assist the Working Group. In addition to further defining the issues involved with the right to development, the task force has recommended the creation of a legally binding framework of policies and development plans that address both the right to development and Goal 8 of the Millennium Goals. It has also created a set of criteria for assessing global partnerships that are working towards the right to development.

Within the Working Groups, discussion has shifted from defining the nature of the right to development towards practical application of the suggested reforms. In its seventh session, held

in 2006, the Working Group called for the reform of international trade organizations to adhere to the guidelines of the Human Rights Declaration and the Declaration of the Right to Development when conducting their business. Goal 8 was the starting point of much of the debate during the 7th session. Other issues of development brought up in earlier sessions were reconsidered, such as trade restructuring, technology transfer, debt, responsibility of the private sector, global governance, migration, and regional initiatives – specifically the problems of sub-Saharan Africa.

International organizations have begun to play a larger role in the process of assisting development within a human rights framework. In June 2005, the IMF passed the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI), which provides for 100 percent debt relief from three multilateral institutions to a group of low-income countries. This initiative was passed in accordance with Millennium Goal 8. The World Health Organization and the WTO have also addressed issues brought up by the UN's Working Group. The right to development as a human right enjoys wide, though not universal, support amongst both developed and developing nations.

The Working Group and the Task Force both noted that many issues related to the right to development have yet to be properly discussed. These issues include landlocked and small island states, foreign direct investment in developing countries, migration and the right of freedom of movement, the need for corporate responsibility amongst transnational corporations, poverty and instability in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the creation of regional cooperative groups to aid in development.

The Task Force has also recognized that there are trade offs to development that may limit the scope of reforms. Careless development can lead to environmental degradation. The opening of developing states' economies to globalization can lead to economic shocks that are beyond any national capacity to control. Development may also be limited by political violence, poor governance, poor policies, and a lack of support for the reforms in the international community. These are all issues that the Working Group and Task Force seek to deal with in future meetings.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- How can the goals of the Right to Development be effectively implemented?
- How does globalization affect a county's development?
- How does your state's development affect your role in the international community?
- Is your state willing to accept a "right" to development? If not, how can this be reconciled with the direction being taken by much of the international community on this issue?

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[www.ohchr.org/english/issues/development/taskforce.htm](http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/development/taskforce.htm) - UN High Level Task Force on Development  
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[www.unctad.org/Templates/StartPage.asp?intItemID=2068](http://www.unctad.org/Templates/StartPage.asp?intItemID=2068) - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

## MISSING PERSONS

The United Nations, while respecting the rights of its Member States, has always placed a tremendous level of import on the protection of individuals' human rights. Throughout recent decades, the issue of Missing Persons, particularly in relations to their disappearance amidst armed conflict, has become a serious topic in the arena of human rights. Historically, a significant number of people have gone missing due to government actions, and the phenomenon persists today. Referred to as an "enforced disappearance," the person who disappears is more

often than not a political dissident or a person considered to be on the wrong side of an armed conflict. This person is typically forcibly removed from their home and family, and often either detained for an extreme amount of time or even killed. Because evidence of the disappearances is so well hidden, and because the disappearances are often beneficial to those in a position of power, the perpetrators of enforced disappearances operate with impunity, fearing no repercussions from their actions. When regimes change, the agents of disappearance often claim protection under statutes of limitations as well, making enforced disappearances very difficult to prosecute.

The United Nations has stepped into the role of investigator for missing persons across the globe. In 1980, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights established the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which entered into force on 1 July 2002, formally established enforced disappearance as a crime against humanity – an important distinction because crimes against humanity bear no statute of limitations.

The General Assembly has addressed the issue in several resolutions as well. The 1992 Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance condemns any enforced disappearance as "an offence to human dignity." The Declaration also establishes standards for the definition, legal treatment, and courses of remedy for cases of enforced disappearance. It serves as a foundation for all further UN work on this subject.

Currently, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances is the main UN organization concerned with missing persons. The Working Group accepts reports on enforced disappearances from those close to the disappeared, and attempts to work with the Member States in which the disappearances took place to ascertain the fate of the disappeared. The Group also prepares an annual report and attempts to schedule visits to Member States with a large number of unresolved disappearances.

Issues of immediate concern are a continued rise in the incidence of enforced disappearances reported to the Working Group and the adaptation of the technique of enforced disappearance to the modern world. In today's interconnected world, cases of enforced disappearance can involve more than one Member State, which often has the effect of making the operation even more organized and secretive. Disappearances of this sort are especially difficult to trace and prosecute.

Currently, the UN and its Member States are in the approval and ratification process for the draft International Convention for the Protection of all Persons against Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance. The Convention was written by an Intersessional Open-Ended Working Group over the past several years, and the draft was released in the Report of that group on 2 February 2006. The Draft Convention not only focuses on enforced disappearances as a result of imprisonment or military action, but also speaks to the enforced disappearance of children. It calls for an absolute prohibition on enforced disappearances, and gives particular attention to the rights of the victims, including families and the communities of the disappeared.

Action will be taken on the draft by the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly, after which the process of formal ratification by Member States will begin. The ratification of a legally binding instrument addressing enforced disappearances will be an important step in the struggle against disappearances. However, there are still many issues to be resolved. For example, enforcement of the convention would be



difficult because, unless it happens on a mass scale, the enforced disappearances would not be considered a crime against humanity under the draft convention, and thus not automatically under the jurisdiction of the ICC. Also, there are often domestic legal issues contributing to enforced disappearances that can be difficult for the international community to influence.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- What is your country's position on the draft International Convention for the Protection of all Persons against Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance?
- Does your country participate in agreements with other Member States that may support enforced disappearances?
- How can states be encouraged to create and enforce protections against enforced disappearance?
- What mechanisms can states be encouraged to enact for accurate reporting of the incidence and outcomes of enforced disappearances in their countries?

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### Additional Web Resources:

- [www.ohchr.org/english/issues/disappear/index.htm](http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/disappear/index.htm) - Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances
- [www.ic-mp.org/home.php](http://www.ic-mp.org/home.php) - International Commission on Missing Persons

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## THE SIXTH COMMITTEE: LEGAL

**PURVIEW OF THIS SIMULATION:** The General Assembly Sixth Committee addresses issues relating to international law. The Committee not only drafts new international law, but also offers interpretations of existing international law as well as recommendations for members to implement international regulations through national law.

More information is available on-line at: [www.un.org/law/cod/sixth/60/sixth60.htm](http://www.un.org/law/cod/sixth/60/sixth60.htm)

### RESPONSIBILITY OF STATES FOR INTERNATIONALLY WRONGFUL ACTS

In international law, responsibility is defined as the "international obligation resulting from harmful effects of internationally wrongful acts." Within the international community, there are some actions universally considered either dangerous or otherwise irresponsible. However, there remain many individual aspects within this field of international law that are ambiguous. This is by far one of the more precarious global issues, as it addresses who is responsible for various actions, what types of actions a state can be held accountable for, and how to hold those states accountable.

Since 1949, the International Law Commission (ILC) has been drafting articles that struggle to answer these very questions. The articles governing state responsibility are meant to be more general than the other laws set forth by the international community. They are meant to act as a catchall to hold states responsible for wrong doings that are not specifically governed by a previously established and accepted set of international laws or treaties. The first draft articles were finally presented to the Sixth Committee in 2001. One of the great accomplishments of these articles is in defining how state responsibility can be assigned; this covers both official organs of the states, or individuals who have been given authority by the state. The draft articles also cover the obli-

gations states have concerning agreements and treaties, and they discuss reparations a state would be responsible for in cases of injury to citizens of another state.

While international law is being created in this area, bodies such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) have been working with what the UN, the ILC, and other international organizations have provided them. However, the list of internationally wrongful acts that fall under the jurisdiction of the ICC make it difficult for them to hold states accountable and enforce their decisions. The ICC has been effective, but this is currently not enough.

The specific incidents that qualify as internationally wrongful acts can also be difficult to agree upon. These include issues from serious violations of human rights to resources that cross international borders such as water rights. Another large issue facing the international community in this arena is that of terrorism. As an internationally wrongful act, it is difficult to reach consensus in all cases regarding who terrorists are and what constitutes a terrorist attack—even based on working definitions within the UN. The topic becomes even more complicated when the issue of state sponsored terrorism is involved. As an example of an internationally wrongful act, the international community faces the problem of how to prove state collusion, and how to hold the state responsible. This is why the responsibility of states for internationally wrongful acts is so crucial; only States or organs



of a State can be held accountable (i.e., not individual terrorist or militant groups).

The UN and international community continue to debate the draft articles of the ILC and the basic definitions within the articles. The UN is also working on codifying the tenets held within the articles by possibly amending or adding to the Geneva Conventions or passing new resolutions to supplement the current draft. Several resolutions have been passed recently, but unfortunately many of them have simply been expressions of the international community's discontent with current situations. That is also making it harder to bring things before bodies such as the ICC, as definitions are often times vague, or valuable documents do not contain the correct terminology to hold states accountable for internationally wrongful acts.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- What does your government believe should be included in the draft articles that define state responsibility?
- What incidents of internationally wrongful acts have affected your state?
- How can terrorists, civilians and governments be held accountable? How should they be? When is this an individual responsibility, possibly to be taken up by the ICC, versus a state responsibility? Can it ever be both?
- How can international law balance responsibility and national sovereignty?
- If a State is deemed liable for the act, should it be responsible for damages?

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[www.un.org/law/ilc](http://www.un.org/law/ilc) - ILC homepage  
[untreaty.un.org/ilc/guide/9\\_6.htm](http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/guide/9_6.htm) - UN Treaty Guide, ILC link  
[lcil.law.cam.ac.uk/ILCSR/Statresp.htm](http://lcil.law.cam.ac.uk/ILCSR/Statresp.htm) Lauterpacht Research Centre for International Law State Responsibility Project

### **NATIONALITY OF NATURAL PERSONS IN RELATION TO SUCCESSION OF STATES**

The successions of states, often resulting from violent transitions, create countless problems. Issues arise not only for the governments attempting to create order and autonomy but also for the persons affected by the succession. Frequently caught between the predecessor state and the subsequent state or states, persons in this situation are often ignored, or worse, their rights violated as they become de facto refugees in their own homes. It is in this context that the United Nations and the international community attempt to describe and outline the rights and privileges of people between the fall of one government and the rise of another.

In international law, nationality is defined as the governmental recognition of a person's rights and freedoms based on their state of residence. Statelessness occurs when a government collapses. Until that government is replaced, the citizens of the predecessor state remain in a condition of legal ambiguity. It has been the goal of the UN to ensure that the predecessor state's natural persons have their basic human rights preserved until a successor state emerges. Additionally, once it is clear that a successor state has emerged, it is important to make sure that persons living within the new state have full rights of citizenship afforded to them by the new government.

Throughout the 1990s, the General Assembly has invited Member States to participate in the discussion on the nationality of natural persons in relation to succession of states through the submission of written comments. In 1997 the Assembly further urged governments to submit their comments and observations on this topic, and it later asked for comments specifically on the need for a convention on this topic. With the collaboration and support of as much of the international community as possible, the hope is that any outcomes on the protection of persons caught in this situation will be as strong, well protected, and enforceable as possible.

While the General Assembly has been working directly with Member States for their input on the issue, it has also been working closely with other UN bodies to draft specific work on the topic. In resolution A/RES/55/153, the General Assembly recognized the work of the International Law Commission's (ILC's) 51st Session. It is through this resolution, and through the work of the International Law Commission's report of its session, that an outline of basic rules of international law concerning the nationality of persons affected by the succession of states emerged. First among the tenants is that all due diligence be taken by the successor governments to ensure the protection of peoples' rights and with that the recognition of their nationality.

However, the report is also very clear that this designation has as much to do with "habitual residency" as any other claim to nationality. The articles say that a successor state may not grant nationality to those living outside its borders. The articles of this session have been instrumental to the discussion of the topic and



also provide legal definitions and expectations that have been used since resolution's passage.

In its 59th session, the General Assembly again called upon Member States to comment on the work that has been done to strengthen the definitions of and law surrounding nationality of natural persons in relation to succession of states. It also encouraged elaborations at the regional and sub-regional levels to propose legal instruments for regulating questions of nationality of natural persons in relation to the succession of states.

These resolutions and other UN documentation have outlined a solid framework from which future work can be built. As with most topics of international law, this issue can be difficult because it crosses several areas of national sovereignty. The UN and other international bodies still recognize this as a problem that must be addressed. The UN, the GA 6th Committee, and the International Law Commission continue to work to define international law as well as implement measures to guarantee the rights of peoples during the transition from predecessor state to successor state, the rights of people within a new successor state, the prevention of genocide or armed conflict as a result of governmental transition, the protection of stateless nationals who are abroad during governmental transitions, and aide for stateless nationals. These sub-topics only represent a few of the considerations that the United Nations seeks to address in future sessions. There is a deadline of 2008 for member states to submit comments on the ILC's and the 6th Committee's current frame work of suggested laws and legal norms on the subject, and many of the comments received thus far agree with the current focus on the encouragement of internal laws on the area. But many worry that focusing on this side of this issue, for example, ignores the difficulty of maintaining the rule of law during the often violent succession of states.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- How does your government define "nationality" as well as "natural persons"?
- Does your state's definition of nationality differ from the UN's?
- What kind of importance does your state place upon nationality?
- How can international law be strengthened to help protect persons affected?
- How can successor states be encouraged to ensure the rights of citizens of the previous states?

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- "Nationality and Statelessness: A Handbook for Parliamentarians," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2005.
- Khong, Yuen Foong, and S. Niel MacFarlane, *Human Security and the UN: A Critical History*, 2006.

## UN Documents:

- A/CN.4/497  
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A/CN.4/489  
A/CN.4/L.573  
A/52/10  
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A/RES/54/112  
A/RES/54/111  
A/RES/52/156  
A/RES/51/160  
A/RES/50/45  
A/RES/49/51  
A/RES/48/31

## Additional Web Resources:

- [www.justiceinitiative.org/statelessness\\_meeting](http://www.justiceinitiative.org/statelessness_meeting) - Justice Initiative
- [www.refugeelawreader.org/c/58/\\_d\\_Stateless](http://www.refugeelawreader.org/c/58/_d_Stateless) - The Refugee Law Reader page on Statelessness
- [www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home) - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- [www.un.org/law/ilc/index.htm](http://www.un.org/law/ilc/index.htm) - International Law Commission

