CHAPTER FOUR
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND COMMITTEES

Introduction

The General Assembly is the main deliberative policy-making body of the United Nations (UN) and is empowered to address all international issues covered by the Charter. In many ways, it acts as the "central hub" of the United Nations. Many UN bodies report to the General Assembly, but not all of these bodies are subsidiary. For example, the Security Council constantly updates the General Assembly on its work, but it is an independent body; its work does not require the General Assembly's independent approval. In contrast, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and is governed by General Assembly mandates. Other subsidiary bodies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), also have direct reporting relationships with the General Assembly.

The UN Charter assigns each of the main Committees of the General Assembly specific tasks and topics to discuss during each session. Since each Member State has a seat in every Committee, it is important to note that the points of discussion do not overlap; that is, even if two or more Committees are discussing a general topic area, each Committee is responsible for discussing a very specific point or aspect of that topic. For example, the Fourth Committee may discuss the Israeli-Palestine conflict with regard to its political components. However, issues concerning the legal, social, or economic components of the Israeli-Palestine conflict are left to other Committees, the General Assembly Plenary, or the Security Council. Therefore, Representatives in each Committee should take care not to expand the discussion of any topic beyond the limitations set by

their Committee's mandate and into another Committee's area of discussion.

A note concerning funding: The Fifth Committee only makes financing decisions concerning the UN's regular, annual budget, not those decisions dealing with voluntary contributions or new outlays. Even though AMUN will not be simulating the Fifth Committee, other Committees generally do not act unless sufficient funds are available for their proposals, thus financial questions should still be considered during the other Committees' deliberations. Therefore, if a Committee creates a new program or initiative, that Committee should specify how the program can or will be funded, and if the program falls within the UN's regular annual budget, that resolution should defer to the Fifth Committee to establish funding.

The purpose of the Combined Plenary session on the final day is to ratify the resolutions which passed in the four Main GA Committees and build consensus. While a small amount of additional debate is typical, it is expected that the work done by each Committee over the first three days of the Conference will be respected. It would thus be rare for significant changes to be made, or for a resolution to fail in the Plenary session after passing in Committee.

 Following are brief descriptions of each Committee simulated at AMUN, along with the Committee's agenda, a brief purview of each committee, a brief background and research guide for each agenda topic and the Committee's website address. Representatives should use this information as the first step in their research on the powers and limitations of their particular Committee in relation to the agenda topics.

THE CONCURRENT GENERAL ASSEMBLY PLENARY

Purview of the Simulation: The General Assembly Plenary typically considers issues that several Committees would have the power to discuss, but which would best be addressed in a comprehensive manner. Likewise, the General Assembly Plenary is also responsible for coordinating work between the many different bodies of the United Nations. For example, the 60th General Assembly recently established a Peacebuilding Commission that will oversee the United Nations' peacebuilding processes and coordinate the work of the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General, and Member States emerging from conflict situations. Note that if the Security Council, which is given the primary task of ensuring peace and security by the Charter, is discussing a particular issue, the General Assembly (Plenary) will cease its own deliberations and defer to the Security Council.

Website: www.un.org/ga/61/plenary/plenary.shtml

2001-2010: DECADE TO ROLLBACK MALARIA IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA

In recent years, the global community has acknowledged the irrefutable links between disease, development and security. With the adoption of Millennium Development Goal 6, the United Nations declared that malaria, along with other diseases, stands in the way of full peace and development. Nearly 3,000 people are killed by malaria each day; 90% of these deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa. Malaria is also present in the Americas, South-East Asia, Western Pacific and Eastern Mediterranean states. Combined, these areas are home to nearly 3 billion people. The two most effective responses to

the problem of malaria are the use of insecticide treated bed nets and anti-malarial drugs, succinctly illustrating the methods of prevention versus treatment. Even when funding is adequate to provide drugs or nets, those most at risk have often not had access to help. While malaria has been known to cause death in humans of all ages, the vast majority of deaths occur in pregnant women and children under the age of five, targeted demographics in several other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Adding to the problem, the World Health Organization (WHO) has begun to acknowledge that climate change is allowing malaria to spread to parts of the world previously not impacted by the disease such as the Republic of Korea and Papua New Guinea. These alarming statistics have pushed malaria to the forefront of the UN agenda, especially with the passing of resolution

55/284, which officially established the Decade to Rollback Malaria, especially in Africa.

The United Nations and other international organizations operating with the cooperation of the UN have set varying goals to confront the problem of malaria. Millennium Development Goal 6 calls on the global community to "halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases." In 2000 African heads of state met in Abuja, Nigeria to discuss ways of combating the progression of malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, through advocacy for fulfillment of prior commitments, development of policies to prevent and control the spread of the epidemics, expansion of resources to support those living with HIV/AIDS, and protection of at-risk populations. The Abuja Declaration on Malaria of 2000 declared the African Union's goal of ensuring that by 2005, 60% of people infected with malaria would be able to get medical assistance within 24 hours, 60% of at-risk pregnant women would receive prenatal treatment and 60% of children under 5 would have access to insecticide-treated nets. The results vary by country, but in general it is agreed that more work is still required to fully attain these goals. Finally, the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) initiative, backed by the WHO, has set a goal of halving malaria related mortality by 2010 and again by 2015. According to the 2007 UN report on the progress of the MDGs sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world with no progress or reverse progress since 2000. Other regions, such as Asia and Latin America, also lack the ability to achieve the goals if they remain on current projections.

Given the graveness of the malaria epidemic, the UN has taken a lead in creating a global push against malaria through several major initiatives. In 2002, the UN established the New Partnership for Africa's Development in an attempt to consolidate efforts and to provide increased assistance to the African Union on a variety of issues, including malaria control. The initiative has been relatively successful in streamlining UN actions in regards to Africa. Along with the creation of the new partnership, the WHO also created the Global Malaria Programme which has been successful on several fronts. A key recommendation and goal of the Programme has been to secure Artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) drugs. ACT has been successful against drug-resistant strains of malaria, has a low incidence of side-affects and produces more rapid results than most malarial drugs. However, these drugs are expensive and out of reach for many malaria victims. Even with UN backing, the program has had some difficulties in procuring these drugs due to their lack of profitability and therefore lack of production.

The RBM initiative was founded in 1998 and has been successful in increasing malaria awareness throughout the world. Within two years of its founding, the initiative has been credited with doubling the international financial investment in malaria control. When the World Malaria Report of 2005 was released, the initiative faced criticism for its failure to help achieve the Abuja 2000 goals in time for 2005, mostly due to a lack of influential leadership. In response to this criticism, RBM entered a period of change and has seen an increase in global effectiveness in recent years. While the RBM initiative has been established to implement integrated programs, the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria was established in 2002 to fund programs around the world which were fighting these diseases. To date, the fund has approved over $2.4 billion specifically for programs aimed at malaria, constituting 45% of all malaria programs in the world. The fund has declared that it will need to triple in size by 2010 to distribute over $8 billion per year in funds.

The General Assembly has called for the international community to support the RBM initiative and other anti-malarial campaigns through funding for research, education and access to treatment. Although there are many UN organs and NGOs involved, all are lacking the financial capacity to adequately administer their respective initiatives; therefore, all countries and public-private donors were encouraged to continue supporting the various programs' endeavors. The General Assembly encouraged all African countries to adopt the recommendations of the Abuja Summit by waiving or minimizing taxes and tariffs on nets and other anti-malarial products. The General Assembly also appealed to the manufacturers of insecticide treated nets to facilitate the transfer of technology to African countries and manufacturers so as to increase access.

In the past the UN has focused on its role of bringing people together to fight this disease. While it is too early to know whether recent surges in malaria control have been successful, there is already discussion of possible new approaches to the problem, and many believe it is time for the UN to take action itself. One concern which has been raised in the past was the state of basic health services in many malaria impacted areas. This issue is seeing a resurgence as the global community turns its attention to getting medical assistance to infected people with 24 hours as the next step in the process of eliminating malaria. Strong links have recently made been between the prevalence of malaria and HIV/AIDS. Several organizations have begun to consider just how deeply integrated these two diseases may be and it may lead to new investment and technology to combat both diseases. And finally, the world has begun to see serious research into potential cures for the disease and with some promising initial results. The UN must continue to encourage research and development in order to make international efforts even more successful and efficient.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:
• How can the international community encourage the financial commitments needed to ensure the existence of these programs?
• Should the UN take a direct role in combating Malaria or continue to provide a forum for other organizations to solve the problem?
• What is the relationship between treatment and prevention? How should the international community balance its allocation of resources between the two aproaches?

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WHA58.2 – World Malaria Report 2005
Abuja Declaration 2000 – Rolling Back Malaria in Africa
Maputo Declaration on Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases

Additional Web Resources:

www.rollbackmalaria.org – Roll Back Malaria Partnership

www.theglobalfund.org – The Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

www.unicef.org/mdg/disease.html - UNICEF Malaria

www.un.org/ga/62/plenary/africa/bkg.shtml - UN General Assembly Joint Debate on the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Decade to Roll Back Malaria

www.who.int/malaria - World Health Organization 'Global Malaria Programme

THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

On 27 September 1996, the Taliban, a conservative Islamic movement, ousted the sitting Afghan government of Burhanuddin Rabbani and positioned itself as the legitimate ruling government of Afghanistan. Pakistan was the only state to officially recognize the new leaders of Afghanistan, with most countries and the United Nations, continuing to recognize the exiled Rabbani as the legitimate leader of that country. After the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States, that country took a more serious stance against the Taliban-led Afghani government when it refused to cooperate with a US request to hand over the alleged architect of the attacks, Osama Bin Laden. In response to this refusal to cooperate, the US created an international coalition named Operation Enduring Freedom, with the goal of rooting out terrorist strongholds in Afghanistan, capturing Osama Bin Laden and removing the unrecognized government of the Taliban. By 17 November 2001 the Taliban had been officially removed from power.

Recognizing that Afghanistan would need temporary leadership before an official, democratically elected government could take control, Afghani leaders met in Bonn, Germany, in December 2001, to create the Afghan Interim Authority. This was to be followed within six months by a Transitional Authority, which would last for a period of two years culminating in national elections for a democratically elected leadership. In addition to this temporary governing body, the Bonn Agreement created the process by which a Constitutional Commission would draft and adopt a constitution that had the consent of the people. The Bonn Agreement was followed by the Afghanistan Compact of 31 January 2006, which emphasized three goals: security; governance, rule of law, and human rights; and economic and social development. The Compact also formulated benchmarks and timelines to guide the joint efforts of the Afghani government and the international community.

Today the UN has a multi-faceted political and developmental presence in Afghanistan. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was created to help bolster the Interim Government and UN operations within Afghanistan. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) works to coordinate all UN operations inside Afghanistan with the Afghani Government and the international community through the framework of the Afghanistan Compact. The stated goals of the UNAMA generally coincide with the Compact but also specifically include such things as supporting the electoral process through the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission.

There have been several positive steps toward a democratic Afghanistan with the help of these UN operations and institutions. In December 2003 a constitution was adopted creating a presidential-style government with a bicameral legislature. The next year, in October, national elections were held and Hamid Karzai, former chairman of the Bonn Agreement, was elected President of Afghanistan. The success of these goals of the Bonn Agreement has been accompanied by moderate social progress for the Afghan people, especially a limited improvement in women's rights. Such improvements, however, have been overshadowed by continued violence outside of Kabul, increased poppy production for the illegal narcotics trade, and the inability to enforce the rule of law in this mostly rural country.

In a letter dated 23 January 2008, NATO Secretary-General Japp de Hoop Scheffer outlined the status of the Bonn Agreement goals. According to Scheffer, corruption at all levels and branches of government presents a real threat to the legitimacy of the Afghani government. The struggle with corruption has led to an illegal narcotics trade of opium and heroin, which has become a $3 billion a year industry and a situation where governance and rule of law is almost nonexistent outside of Kabul. Estimates suggest that between 70% and 90% of Afghans rely solely on Sharia law or some form of tribal law. The lack of security and stable governance presents the single greatest deterrent to achieving the economic, social and human rights goals of the Afghanistan Compact.

The continued mandate extensions of the ISAF suggests that the Afghan army is not prepared to oppose armed insurgent groups such as the Taliban and Al Qaeda on its own. Scheffer's report details the inability to produce tangible results in disbanding these armed groups, which according to the desired goals the Afghanistan Compact was to have been accomplished by the end of 2007 throughout all of Afghanistan's provinces. Similarly, the Afghan National Police is not sufficiently prepared to secure areas where the ISAF has already discovered and routed insurgent strongholds. This reality was driven home in early 2008 as Taliban insurgents became an increased

presence in the southern provinces, capable of such brazen attacks as the 13 June 2008 on the Kandahar prison, freeing some 400 Taliban members.

The Global Policy Forum concluded in October 2004 that Afghanistan is a failed state in regards to the United Nations and the international community's goals of rebuilding the political, economic, and democratic social structures of Afghanistan post-Operation Enduring Freedom. The recent history of Afghanistan has been turbulent and bloody; the successful transition to a free and democratic society in the near future will not be easy. To achieve the goals of security, governance, rule of law, human rights, and economic and social development, the United Nations and the international community must be willing to come together to enact policy in addition to providing the necessary financial, institutional, and military support.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:
  • How can the international community assist in reaching the goals of the Afghanistan Compact and the mandate of the UNAMA?
  • Does the United Nations need to reassess its goals given the current situation in Afghanistan? How should cultural considerations inform those goals?
  • What is the connection between the illegal narcotics trade and the barriers to improving the situation in Afghanistan? What economic measures can help decrease Afghanistan's reliance on poppy exports?

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