



THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIRD COMMITTEE: SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN, AND CULTURAL

Purview of the Simulation

While the Committee's areas of concern and its work often overlap with other United Nations organs, the Third Committee focuses its discussions on social, humanitarian and cultural concerns that arise in the General Assembly. The Third Committee discusses issues with, recognizes reports of, and submits recommendations to the

General Assembly in coordination with other United Nations organs, such as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). For more information concerning the purview of the UN's General Assembly as a whole, see page 20.

Website: <http://www.un.org/ga/third/index.shtml>

ELIMINATING RAPE AND OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ALL THEIR MANIFESTATIONS

Although condemned by the international community, rape and other forms of sexual violence remain pervasive throughout the world; the UN estimates that one in three women will experience physical or sexual violence in her lifetime. Violence can occur within a family, in the general community, and in some places it is perpetrated or condoned by the state. Sexual violence includes acts such as marital rape, sexual abuse, sex slavery, sex trafficking, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy and systematic sexual violence used as an instrument of war by participants in violent conflict, including soldiers. Mass and systematic uses of sexual violence most often occur in societies in which gender equality is not fully or at all recognized.

Sexual violence affects not only the physical and mental health of victims but also the health, peace, and stability of societies at large. Many countries confront challenges arising from a high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, many cases of which are a direct result of rape and other acts of sexual violence. In poverty-stricken areas, the repercussions of sexual violence radiate throughout entire countries. As many of the victims who have contracted diseases as a result of acts of sexual violence are unable to afford medical care, and as some countries are unable to provide adequate medical care to those victims, mortality rates rise. This often leads to broken families and orphaned children, which further strains societal stability. Unintended pregnancies also add to the social and financial burdens women, families, and societies have to bear, and these burdens are exacerbated when HIV/AIDS and other diseases are passed from mother to child. Rape victims also often face considerable stigma stemming from cultural attitudes surrounding rape and may find themselves ostracized from their family and social networks.

In the past, the United Nations has taken several steps to address the issue of eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence. Past resolutions have consistently called upon states to prevent and prosecute rape and other forms of sexual violence, while past conventions have set specific protections for victims of sexual violence, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Geneva Conventions and the Protocols additional thereto and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute have also played a significant role in past actions of the United Nations. The Geneva Conventions have outlined sexual violence against women during armed conflict, including acts such as systematic rape, sexual slavery, and forced

pregnancy, as violations of human rights. Similarly, the Rome Statute established jurisdiction to try crimes of sexual violence, such as rape as a tool of war, within the established framework of international law. Additionally, in 2000 the Security Council specifically addressed the gravity of violence against women in armed conflict (Resolution 1325).

The UN has sponsored four World Conferences on Women since 1975, the last of which took place in Beijing in 1995. There were 12 areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action, several of which pertained to rape and sexual violence. The Declaration addressed violence against women in armed conflict as a critical area of concern requiring urgent action. At the five- and ten- year reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, international observers expressed harsh criticism that significant gaps persisted between commitments pledged and actions taken by Member States and alleged that the conditions for women around the world actually worsened after 1995.

Despite affirmations of strong commitment, the international community remains challenged in its attempts to implement effective courses of action to reduce sexual violence. In adopting A/62/134 in 2008, the General Assembly strongly reaffirmed the obligations of Member States to work to eradicate rape and sexual violence, in particular those States party to past conventions on sexual violence. While calling upon countries to provide support services to the victims of rape and sexual violence, the body further stipulated that a comprehensive strategy of prevention and prosecution of rape be developed and its implementation monitored.

Also in 2008, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon launched the UNiTE to End Violence against Women, which seeks to coordinate relevant UN agencies and offices to help prevent and punish violence against women. The Secretary-General's campaign has targeted five national-level outcomes to achieve by 2015: adoption and enforcement of national laws, effective implementation of multi-sector plans of action, increased support for data collection and monitoring, renewed attention to social mobilization and prevention strategies, and firm commitment from Member States to address sexual violence in conflict situations.

Earlier this year, the 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was held. Much of the review focused on the accomplishments and improvements achieved concerning the elimination of rape and other forms of sexual violence, but it was again underscored that strong action is still needed from the international community. While Member States have repeatedly made

strong commitments to reducing sexual violence against women, the issue remains complicated in terms of accountability, prevention, protection, and reporting. Further investments in capacity building and information dissemination are needed.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective include the following:

- What progress has your state made in implementing improved laws to punish sexual violence? Does your state have a multi-sector plan to address violence against women?
- Why has implementation of effective strategies been so difficult? How can the international community better encourage Member States to devote the resources necessary to fully implement the laws and policies necessary to eliminate rape and other forms of sexual violence?
- How is national sovereignty affected by this issue, particularly with regard to nations still in conflict? How can the UN strengthen accountability mechanisms?
- What can the General Assembly do to assist in the full implementation of existing agreements already addressing the issue?

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A/60/211
E/2009/27
E/CN.6/2010/8

EGM/BPFA-MDG/2009/REPORT
S/RES/1325

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women
Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court
Geneva Conventions and 1977 Protocols
Millennium Development Goals
Vienna Declaration

Additional Web Resources

<http://5wcw.org/> - 5th World Conference on Women
<http://endviolence.un.org> - UN Campaign to End Violence Against Women
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/> - UN Division for the Advancement of Women

STATUS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AS IT RELATES TO CHILD LABOR

Child labor is an international crisis exposing over 200 million children to increased exploitation and abuse. The most prominent issues concerning child labor are the trafficking of child laborers, poverty, and the ignorance of parents and children regarding the dangers of working conditions. Child labor negatively affects other children's rights by threatening their health and education, leading to further abuse and reducing the quality of their lives. The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) estimates that individuals under 18 years represent 40 to 50 percent of all victims of forced labor, and that 1.2 million children are trafficked annually. Child labor is considered to be both a cause and consequence of poverty. Although poverty is associated with higher levels of child exploitation, industrialized countries are not immune to this form of human rights violation. Meeting children's rights is not only essential for their development but also for achieving the vision of the Millennium Declaration.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1990, recognizes that children need special rights in addition to those presented in the Declaration of Human Rights. Despite past United Nations actions relating to child labor, the Convention became the first legally binding international treaty to establish civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights for all children. The treaty details these rights in 54 articles and two Optional Protocols. Formally adopted by 193 states, the Convention is currently the most widely endorsed human rights treaty in history. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has been tasked with monitoring the progress of the Convention. Once a year, the Committee submits a report to the Third Committee.

The Convention has been a successful instrument in transforming the way children are viewed and treated worldwide. The Convention defines child labor as any form of labor which may be harmful to the safety, health, or wellbeing of children under the age of 18 years. The Convention also sets minimum ages for various types of employment. In addition, the Convention has helped connect child labor to other child rights violations. In 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted two optional protocols to specifically address the exploitation of children in sex trafficking and armed conflicts. The protocols use a multifaceted approach to tackle child exploitation by reducing

demand for children in those industries and increasing awareness of these problems. By strengthening the international legal framework, the Convention continues to play a major role in creating local and global policies and programs that support the advancement of children. As a result of Member States' commitments to the Convention, more children are surviving, attending school, and are not forced into child labor.

Recently, the Convention has been a driving force behind encouraging technical global cooperation. UNICEF, the World Bank, the International Labour Organization and state and non-governmental organizations are expected to share statistical data to provide support at the national level. In the past, the international community solely relied on the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) for statistics. Greater data sharing is expected to increase both the quality and relevance of information gathered, which will enable states to enact more effective policies in response.

Though it is estimated that the number of child laborers decreased by 11 percent between 2000 and 2004, the progress made in recent years on child rights has been threatened by the recent global economic crisis. The food and fuel crises led to a decline in household incomes, and economic hardship threatens to push more children out of school and into the workforce. UNICEF indicates that these children are more likely than others to suffer from malnutrition, resulting in stunted growth and decreased intellectual development. Both of these factors increase poverty rates and are overall disadvantageous to long-term global economic development.

The Third Committee considered the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as it relates to child labor in October 2009. The Committee's main concerns included violations of children's rights in the form of abuse, prostitution, sexual violence and forced labor. The body noted the challenges in asserting children's rights as presented in the 2009 UNICEF report on the subject, and reiterated that education remained a key component to reducing the exploitation of child laborers. While noting that the economic crisis was likely to contribute to an increase in global child labor, the Committee encouraged all states to ratify the CRC and its subsequent optional protocols and integrate protections against child labor into all applicable areas of national policy.

In order to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2016, Member States will need to fully adopt the strategies outlined in the 2009 Status of the Convention of the Child Report. These include increasing the quality of education, strengthening physical and social protection of children, promoting cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations at the local, national and international levels, and raising awareness on the root causes and effects of child labor. Prioritizing the safety and well-being of children through difficult austerity measures will also be a key determinant as to whether the economic crisis erases the international community's progress on this issue.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective include the following:

- What actions can Member States take to support the initiative of technical cooperation aimed at eliminating child labor?
- What are the main causes of the large regional disparities in child labor? What are the actions needed to ensure global consistency?
- In what ways can the international community improve collaborative efforts in order to ensure the most effective use of resources during the current global economic crisis?

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A/RES/62/141
A/RES/61/146
A/RES/60/231
A/RES/54/263
A/RES/S-27/2
A/64/435/CORR.1
A/64/172
A/61/299
A/HRC/13/L.5
GA/SHC/3968
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)

Additional Web Resources

- www.ilo.org - International Labour Organization
www.ungift.org - United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking
www.unicef.org - United Nations Children's Fund