



# CHAPTER FIVE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## 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 to the GA. 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 the 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. Because every 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. This is known as the Committee's purview.

A note concerning funding: The Fifth Committee makes financing decisions concerning only 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.

The 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 oversees 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:** <http://www.un.org/ga/>

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGAINST THE WORLD DRUG PROBLEM

The twentieth century began and ended with a robust global illegal drug market. By United Nations estimates, the illegal drug market now exceeds \$300 billion (US) each year, ranking it just behind the Swedish economy in value. Of greater concern is that the world drug problem plays a role in nearly every other major world issue confronted by the United Nations, from international security and trade to poverty, crime, and public health. The economic power of the drug trade combined with its transnational nature and quickly advancing technology for creating new synthetic drugs has presented substantial barriers in past efforts to control the problem.

However, efforts are beginning to show measurable success as the UN continues to seek out new avenues for international cooperation against the world drug problem.

Current international cooperation efforts are built around three key conventions established between 1961 and 1988. The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, passed in 1961 and amended in 1972, codified existing multinational treaties and, more importantly, expanded drug control efforts to include the cultivation of raw materials and established the original international list of controlled substances. This convention also established the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB). The 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances expanded international control efforts to include psychotropic drugs and established four schedules of

psychotropic and synthetic drugs based on their potential for abuse. Finally, the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 expanded drug control worked to include precursor chemicals and efforts to reduce money laundering activities which support drug operations.

In order to provide the support needed for enforcement of the conventions, several offices, departments, non-governmental organizations and commissions have been established over the years. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) was established by the Economic and Social Council in 1946. And predecessors of the International Narcotics Control Board date back to treaties promoted by the League of Nations. A/RES/6/104 (1991) established the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) by combining the Division of Narcotic Drugs of the Secretariat, the secretariat of the International Narcotics Control Board and the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control. In 1997, the UNDCP merged with the Centre for International Crime Prevention to form the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Modern-day control efforts are dominated by the INCB and the UNODC.

Modern-day efforts to combat the world drug problem began in earnest with the 17th United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in 1990; this marked the first time a special session had been convened related to drug control and resulted in the first Political Declaration and Programme of Control (A/S - 17/13). The 20th UNGASS, held in 1998, resulted in a second political declaration which served as the basis for drug control efforts until 2009. In 2009, the high level segment of the CND released the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem. The Plan of Action focuses on the three pillars of modern-day drug control efforts: reducing demand, reducing supply and countering money-laundering activities while promoting judicial cooperation. In 2010, the General Assembly (GA) also adopted the Political Declaration and Plan of Action, as adopted by the CND.

Along with passing the Political Declaration and Plan of Action, the General Assembly has promoted bilateral, regional and international cooperation for both intelligence sharing and cross-border operations. The GA has also addressed the need for sustainable crop control strategies and has encouraged States to simultaneously develop preventative alternative development programmes with these control strategies. Along these lines, the GA has recognized the extensive experience developing countries have in alternative development and has encouraged them to share best practices and lessons learned with States addressing illicit crop cultivation. The GA has also acknowledged the need for enhanced technical assistance at both the national and regional level and has encouraged the UNODC to increase its collaborative efforts with relevant regional organizations.

In future sessions, the General Assembly will need to address ongoing challenges around developing data collection and analysis systems including national and regional indicators for illicit substance production and abuse. Other challenges the GA will need to address include the need for greater regional cooperation, the integration of civil society into comprehensive drug control strategies, and the need for increased financial support for both the UNODC and the International Narcotics Control Board, as they both depend heavily on voluntary financial contributions from Member States.

The future of the world's drug problems are intertwined with other issues facing our world. UN Under-Secretary-General Antonio Costa recognized the connection between the drug trade and other issues when he noted "the drug industry threatens security and development, in countries already stricken by poverty, unemployment and the "HIV pandemic." The balanced approach will need to coordinate with other efforts across the globe such as HIV/AIDS prevention, economic development, financial organizations and more if the effort is to be truly successful. There has been some success — opium production is down 75% since the beginning of the 20th century and use rates appear to be flattening — but there remains work to be done.

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

- To what degree are individual Member States responsible for illegal drug activity within their own borders? How can the UN maintain the sovereignty of Member States while effectively combating the international drug problem?
- Is the three-prong balanced approach the most effective manner of confronting the issue?
- How should the UN handle the growing number of Member States that are choosing to decriminalize or legalize formerly illegal substances such as cannabis?
- How can the UN encourage cooperation between organizations which primarily fight drug problems and other organizations concerned with economic development, public health, poverty and other major world issues?

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- "Synthetic Drugs Popular as Use of Opiates Wanes – UN." *BBC News Europe* (23 June 2010). [www.bbc.co.uk/news/10394096](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10394096).
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## UN Documents

- A/65/93  
A/RES/65/233  
A/RES/64/182  
A/RES/63/197



A/S–20/4 Chapter 4, Section A – Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction  
E/CN.15/2011/L.10  
E/CN.15/2011/L.9  
E/CN.7/2011/L.10/Rev.1  
SG/SM/12969  
UNODC/HONEURO/9/1  
A/S - 17/13, Political Declaration and Programme of Control  
Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem  
United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988  
Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971  
Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961

### **Additional Web Resources**

[www.incb.org/incb/index.html](http://www.incb.org/incb/index.html) – International Narcotics Control Board  
[www.unodc.org/unodc/index.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/index.html) – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime  
[www.interpol.int/default.asp](http://www.interpol.int/default.asp) – International Criminal Police Organization

## **UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS**

Well into the 21st century, human trafficking remains a significant challenge for the international community. The United Nations estimates that nearly 2.5 million people are victims of human trafficking annually. Every Member State is affected as a source of victims, a transit point, or a destination. An overwhelming number of victims are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labor. Other forms of trafficking include bonded labor, domestic servitude, forced marriage and the exploitation of children.

In 2000, the United Nations adopted the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Convention) and then in 2003 adopted the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Trafficking Protocol). The Convention and the Trafficking Protocol were the first global legally binding documents that contained an agreed definition of trafficking in persons. The Convention and Protocol committed Member States to take efforts to prevent trafficking, protect victims of trafficking, and promote cooperation between states (together known as the Three Ps). The Trafficking Protocol calls on Member States to develop domestic legislation that criminalizes trafficking in persons, as well as having the intent to, being an accomplice of, or encouraging others to participate in trafficking of people.

Multiple actors across the UN system are engaged in efforts to prevent human trafficking and support victims of trafficking. In 2007, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in conjunction with other agencies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), launched the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT). UN.GIFT works toward eradicating human trafficking by reducing the vulnerability of potential victims and the demand for exploitation. UN.GIFT encourages Member States to work with other governments and

also with those in business, media, academia and civil society to help foster relationships, share effective practices and create a general network of support between all of those involved. In 2008, UN.GIFT hosted the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking in which multiple sectors came together to discuss progress in meeting UN.GIFT goals. In 2009, the Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking was created to build awareness of the fight against human trafficking.

Human trafficking has also remained high on the General Assembly agenda. In 2008, the GA hosted a thematic debate on human trafficking and in 2009 hosted a second interactive thematic dialogue on collective action to end human trafficking. This work culminated with the passage of the Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons in 2010 to support the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Global Plan of Action takes a human-rights and gender- and age- sensitive approach to address human trafficking. Under the Global Plan, the GA has committed to mainstreaming the issue into the UN's development, education, human rights, good governance, and natural disaster and post-conflict reconstruction policies. The Global Plan of Action will support the ongoing efforts under the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and promotes coordination among Member States, the private sector, and civil society to meet these objectives.

The Global Plan of Action also created the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Trafficking Victims (UNVFVT). The purpose of this trust is to provide humanitarian, legal and financial aid to victims. The Fund is to be managed by the UNODC and a board of Trustees appointed by the Secretary-General. The General Assembly has committed to assessing progress towards meeting the goals and objectives of the Global Plan of Action in 2013.

As of 2009, 132 States have ratified the Trafficking Protocol. While this represents a significant achievement there remain significant challenges to achieving full implementation of the Trafficking Protocol. While many Member States have passed national legislation, the institutional capacity to implement the Protocol varies considerably across States and enhanced technical assistance from the international community is needed. Globally, the conviction rate for trafficking in persons remains low. There are also additional challenges around the development of effective prevention and protection policies and labor exploitation is often not properly addressed in many national policies. Insufficient resource allocation is also a common at the national level. Finally, at the national, regional, and international levels there is a need for more accurate and timely data collection. To meet the goals outlined under the Global Plan of Action, the GA will need to address all of these issues in future sessions.

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

- What can the international community do to assist states in fulfilling the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children?
- What is needed from the international community to effectively implement the Global Plan of Action? How can Member States achieve this?
- How should governments approach working together to eradicate human trafficking?

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## UN Documents

- A/65/288  
A/65/209  
A/RES/65/190  
A/RES/64/293  
A/RES/64/178  
A/RES/63/194  
A/RES/63156  
A/RES/61/180  
A/RES/58/137  
ECOSOC 2006/27  
2005 World Summit Outcomes  
United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children

## Additional Web Resources

- [www.humantrafficking.org/](http://www.humantrafficking.org/) - humantrafficking.org  
[www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org) - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime  
[www.ungift.org/knowledgehub/](http://www.ungift.org/knowledgehub/) - UN.GIFT  
[www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org) - Polaris Project  
[www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/trafficking/index.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/trafficking/index.htm) - Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children