



THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOURTH COMMITTEE

SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION

PURVIEW OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOURTH COMMITTEE

The Fourth Committee is charged with addressing a variety of political and peacekeeping issues. Its political work covers aspects of decolonization, mine action, and Palestinian refugee issues. Its recommendations should address political aspects of an issue and not focus on the economic, social, or development aspects of the topic. For example, while the Fourth Committee may discuss the political problems of the Syrian Golan, it cannot discuss the details of how to promote development in the area, a task better suited for the Second Committee.

The Fourth Committee is also charged with the coordination and operational aspects of UN peacekeeping missions and the oversight of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. This is an important distinction from the Security Council, which develops peacekeeping missions and objectives. For more information concerning the purview of the UN's General Assembly as a whole, see page 21.

Website: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>

THE OCCUPATION OF THE SYRIAN GOLAN

Israel took control of the Syrian Golan at the end of the 1967 Six Days War. The conflict caused between 90,000-115,000 former residents, including 17,000 Palestinian refugees, to move to other parts of Syria. After the war a population of approximately 6,000, mostly Druze, remained in villages in the territory under Israeli control. Following a renewed conflict in 1973 between Syria and Israel, the United Nations set up a mission to monitor the cessation of hostilities, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which remains in place. The Israeli government has undertaken efforts to establish population centers of Israeli nationals in the Syrian Golan. In December 1981, Israel's legislature extended Israeli law, jurisdiction and administration to the area. In response the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 497 which declared the Israeli law "null and void and without international legal effect." In November 2010, the Israeli parliament adopted legislation that mandated either approval by two-thirds of the parliament or public referendum on any Israeli withdrawal from the territory.

The situation in the Middle East, Middle East Peace, and the Question of Palestine are topics that the General Assembly has addressed from nearly the United Nations' inception. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (Special Committee) was established in 1968 by the General Assembly. Despite the existence of other forums for discussing alleged violations of human rights, such as the Human Rights Council, the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) continues to focus particular attention on the allegations of Israeli abuse of Arab populations in the territories captured during the Six Day War. Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Senegal are the current members of the Special Committee, which reviews Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the population in the Syrian Golan as well as the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. The Permanent Representatives of the three Member States of the Special Committee make an annual trip to the region to gather

information for their annual report. Israel has not facilitated a visit by the Special Committee to the West Bank, East Jerusalem or the Syrian Golan. In 2011, because of the violence on the ground inside Syria, the Special Committee was not able to travel there and instead conducted its inquiry regarding the Golan via phone interviews. The General Assembly annually adopts a resolution which calls on Israel to desist from changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan, to refrain from imposing Israeli citizenship on the occupants of the territory and their descendants and calls on Member States not to recognize any of the Israeli measures taken in the Syrian Golan. The resolution has broad support with only Israel opposing and a handful of abstentions.

The United Nations has advocated for a comprehensive Middle East peace and undertaken efforts to end the internal violence in Syria. In May and June 2011 protests twice disrupted the calm along the demilitarized zone between Israel and Syria. Syria claimed that between 20 and 24 Syrians were killed by Israeli forces on 5 June 2011. Following these clashes, the Special Committee heard complaints that Israel was planning to construct a wall near the area of the 2011 protests. The Special Committee recommended asking Israel to conduct an investigation into the deaths of Syrian citizens killed during the 2011 incidents and that Israel facilitate visits for families separated by the decades old conflict.

The Syrian Golan area is a key water source, estimated to supply one-third of Israel's water. In phone interviews with witnesses, the Special Committee heard complaints about Israeli policies on water use that favored agricultural production in Israeli settlements and allegations of damage to Syrian farmers from water restrictions. Should a comprehensive Middle East Peace remain elusive, the Special Committee will continue to address issues relating to the human rights of the Arab populations of territories under Israeli control. Past debate on this issue has been divisive. Israel asserts that the Special Committee distorts the truth and does not help advance the peace process. Many Member States view the Committee's work as an opportunity to bring attention to alleged Israeli actions, even if it has not yielded changes on the ground.

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

- How can Member States encourage cooperation on issues related to the Golan's water supply?
- Are there ways to encourage Israel to cooperate with the Special Committee? Should this topic be debated in the Fourth Committee or in the Human Rights Council? Should the international community simultaneously address the human rights situation inside Syria and that of the Arab residents of the Syrian Golan?
- What mechanisms exist for the population of the Syrian Golan to directly express their views and how should the United Nations take those views into consideration in formulating its actions?



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UN DOCUMENTS

- A/66/370
 A/66/400
 A/RES/66/80
 A/RES/65/106
 A/C.4/66/SR.21
 A/C.4/66/SR.22
 S/RES/497
 A/RES/2443 (XXIII)
 S/8158

ADDITIONAL WEB RESOURCES

- www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/undof/resources.shtml – UN-DOF
- www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/Golan+Heights+Law.htm – Golan Heights Law, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/may/21/golan.background – Timeline of Golan conflict (through 2008), Guardian
- www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14724842 – Golan Heights Profile, BBC

ASSISTANCE IN MINE ACTION

International organizations estimate that landmines injure or kill 4,000 to 5,000 individuals each year, yet these direct injuries pale in comparison to the immense social, emotional, economic, environmental and political impact of landmines. Despite efforts in recent decades, more than 110 million landmines are estimated to still be active

in 78 countries, with especially high numbers in Egypt, Iran, Angola and other nations that experienced significant conflict in the late 20th century. While originally 90 percent of landmine victims were military personnel, in post-conflict areas 80 percent of victims are civilians. Thus, mine action is of the utmost concern for promoting political and social stability across the globe, especially in post-conflict areas.

Despite the staggering cost of landmines, the international community was, until recently, reluctant to react. In 1996, Member States revised Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Protocol II to strengthen its provisions. Protocol II severely restricts the use of mines, booby-traps and other devices, and requires that all devices be equipped with deactivation mechanisms. A year later, States adopted the Anti-Personnel Mine-Ban Treaty (APMBT), also known as the Ottawa Convention. The treaty was developed and implemented through the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), an unprecedented coalition of over 90 States, the United Nations and other international organizations, including 1,400 nongovernmental organizations. This treaty called for the complete destruction of all anti-personnel landmines (APMs) around the world. In 2011, the UN Secretary-General reported that 86 States had completely destroyed their stockpiles and an additional ten States had requested extensions to finish the destruction efforts. These countries represent a little over half of the 160 States bound by the Convention. While many States continue to have stockpiles, the number of APMs eliminated under the Convention is significant – totaling 45 million.

In addition to the physical destruction of landmines, 2000-2010 proved to be a busy decade for mine action acknowledgement in international agreements. In 2006, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War entered into force, which bound Member States to bear responsibility for the effects of remaining explosives in their territory after the end of a conflict. Currently, 26 nations have ratified Protocol V. In 2007, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reaffirmed key pillars of mine action regarding victim assistance.

The United Nations has also developed an extensive network of organizations to carry out mine action activities. Mine action efforts have been guided by the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010. The document sought to coordinate the actions of the 14 separate United Nations agencies working on mine action activities including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Bank and more. The strategy established four quantifiable goals to reach by 2010: a 50 percent reduction in mine-related injuries and deaths; expand freedom of movement for at least 80 percent of the most seriously affected communities; integrate mine-action national development and budgets in 15 countries; and assist countries to develop institutions to manage the landmine threat in 15 countries. These objectives build upon the United Nations' efforts in mine surveying, marking and clearance, mine risk education, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and advocacy. The 2011 report by the Secretary-General (A/66/292) showed significant progress toward all four objectives. A 2011-2015 Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy is currently under development, with hopes that a plan can be finalized in 2012.



Aside from international agreements, frameworks and strategies, local mine action activities are in full operation across the world. The 2011 Portfolio of Mine Action Projects catalogues 238 active projects by 71 governments and organizations. Most projects in the portfolio are focused on the identification and removal of landmines and the destruction of stockpiles. These projects have a combined projected need of \$438 million, but so far have only secured \$131 million. The funding shortfall has impacted mine projects and will continue to do so, despite generous pledges by nations in the past; it is estimated to cost nearly \$3,000 to remove a single landmine. In 2005, the General Assembly declared 4 April as the International Day of Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action in 2005. Most activities associated with the International Awareness Day are coordinated by the ICBL and the United Nations Mine Action Team.

With a framework in place and countless organizations active in mine action efforts, progress will continue to be made. The United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2011 – 2015 will be published in the near future, updating the strategic objectives and possibly introducing new strategies. With the vast number of organizations involved in mine action, the United Nations may need to evaluate the effectiveness of the current structure and decide if new partnerships or consolidations will promote a more expansive, effective and efficient system. Furthermore, efforts will need to be made to find additional sources of funding for these vital efforts. The international community has made significant progress in mine action over the past 15 years and, with proper review of past actions and strategic thinking for future actions, the United Nations can continue to move closer to a landmine-free world as envisioned in the Ottawa Convention 15 years ago.

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

- How effective is the current United Nations structure for mine action? Should efforts be consolidated or expanded?
- Are there additional actions that can be taken to further integrate mine action strategies and awareness into additional internal frameworks and conventions?
- What can the international community do to promote additional funding for mine action efforts and should financial assistance be focused on particular efforts?
- Are the strategic objectives and five pillars of action presented in the 2006-2010 strategy still relevant today? If not, how should they change?

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- A/RES/66/69
 A/RES/64/84
 A/RES/62/99
 A/RES/60/97
 A/66/423
 A/66/292
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 S/RES/1974
 A/64/402
 A/C.4/64/L.9
 A/62/307
 A/62/402
 A/62/307/Corr.3
 A/C.4/62 L.6
 A/60/97
- Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention or the Anti-Personnel Mine-Ban Treaty)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War

ADDITIONAL WEB RESOURCES

- www.dsca.mil/hama_cd/hd/default.htm – Humanitarian Assistance and Mine Action Office, Defense Security Cooperation Agency
- www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/mineaction.shtml – Mine Action, UN Department of Peacekeeping
- www.icbl.org – International Campaign to Ban Landmines
- www.the-monitor.org – Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor