



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 United Nations bodies report to the General Assembly, but not all of these bodies are subsidiary to the General Assembly. 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 United Nations 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. 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 political components of the Israeli-Palestine conflict. However, issues concerning the legal, social, or economic components of the Israeli-Palestine conflict are left to other committees, such as 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 United Nations 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. If the program falls within the United Nations 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 main General Assembly Committees and build consensus. While a small amount of additional debate is typical, it is expected that the work done by each Committee will be respected. It would thus be rare for significant changes to be made or for a resolution to fail in the Combined Plenary session after passing in committee. The Combined Plenary will also receive presentations from several other bodies.

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.

PURVIEW OF THE CONCURRENT GENERAL ASSEMBLY PLENARY

The General Assembly Plenary typically considers issues that are best addressed in a comprehensive manner or that require coordinating work between many bodies of the United Nations. For example, the 60th General Assembly established a Peacebuilding Commission that oversees the United Nations peacebuilding processes and coordinates 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. Additionally, only the Fifth Committee is able to set or discuss the United Nations budget. No other bodies, including the Plenary, are able to do so. The Plenary committees, both concurrent and combined, have the widest latitude of the deliberative bodies to discuss and pass resolutions on a wide variety of topics.

Website: www.un.org/ga/

A WORLD AGAINST VIOLENCE & VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The United Nations General Assembly has worked hard to combat violent extremism and unite the world against violence. Violent extremism aims to advance ideological, religious or political ends through physical and non-physical violence. Violent extremism includes the violent actions taken by individuals, actions taken to support violence committed by others and the underlying set of beliefs that justify the use of violence to advance ideological ends. While typically associated with religious beliefs of extremists, violent extremism is not limited to religion. Violent extremism is often included as part of a broader discussion of terrorism, though not all terrorism is motivated by violent extremism. The rise of global transportation and telecommunications networks have allowed many violent extremist groups to build global networks. The General Assembly's work on violent extremism focuses on addressing the root causes of extremism. The underlying argument is that by eliminating the factors that allow extremist ideologies to spread, the acts of terror and support for those actions can be reduced or eliminated.

Terrorism has been a near ever-present phenomenon since the twentieth century. A growing number of major terrorist attacks in the 1970s spurred increased global awareness and action by the United Nations. Many prominent terror groups of the 1970s aimed to advance primarily political objectives, including far-right ideologies, far-left ideologies and political independence. In 1972, the General Assembly established an Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism, which worked to identify the root causes of terrorism. This Committee recognized that terrorism often occurred as a reaction to oppressive regimes or other restrictive societies, and thus urged the end of colonialist and racist governments. The Ad Hoc Committee reconvened several times in



the following years, supporting the creation of the Declaration of Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism in 1994. The Declaration called for greater cooperation among Member States in counter-terrorism activities and for Member States to end all support to terrorist organizations. Following this declaration, the General Assembly re-established the Committee on International Terrorism in 1996 with the goal of producing a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, however there has been little progress on this issue due to an inability to agree on an acceptable definition of terrorism.

The focus on countering terrorism greatly intensified following the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. In the wake of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, discussions increasingly focused on the perceived root causes of terror and violent ideologies. There was significant disagreement about the root causes, but States and experts regularly pointed at political repression and economic hardship as two major factors. In 2006, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which sought to address the underlying conditions that lead to the spread of terrorism, improve efforts to prevent and combat terrorism, increase the capacity of States and the United Nations to respond to terrorism, and to maintain human rights and rule of law. This Global Strategy marked the first unanimous agreement on counter-terrorism efforts, and its first and fourth pillars reflect a desire to address the root causes of terrorism.

The rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the years following the adoption of the Global Strategy indicated that a different approach was needed to prevent the spread of violent extremism. Indeed, the international community realized that addressing the underlying condition that may foster terrorism is a goal separate from the security aspects of counter-terrorism. Further, the inability of the Ad Hoc Committee to progress on developing a comprehensive convention on international terrorism encouraged the international community to devote special focus to attaining a World against Violence and Extremism (WAVE). In 2013, the General Assembly adopted by consensus its first resolution specifically on WAVE. This resolution recognized the importance of education and community engagement in preventing the rise of violent extremism, as well as the utility of upholding freedoms of expression and of the press in fighting intolerance. Additionally, the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in 2015 brought together over 100 countries and relevant parties to develop an action agenda to prevent and counter violent extremism and raise the importance of CVE for fighting the spread of the Islamic State.

In 2016, the Secretary-General presented the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism to the General Assembly, which called for incorporating both security-based processes and for preventing the underlying conditions that radicalize and foster violent extremist groups. In particular, the Secretary-General called for Member States to create national and regional plans of action to achieve WAVE, noting that existing plans to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals may fit well with the WAVE goals. Later that year, the General Assembly revisited the topic, passing a resolution which emphasized the importance of calling attention to violence against children and women, educating citizens on the importance of human rights, and promoting and practicing tolerance in life and online. Additionally, the General Assembly undertook its fifth biennial review of the Global Counterterrorism Strategy, which echoed the Secretary-General's concerns about the impact of radicalization in prisons and the impact of violent extremism on women and youth.

Looking forward, the United Nations has increased its emphasis on the importance of women and youth to preventing and countering violent extremism. Secretary-General Guterres spoke in 2017 to the Commission on the Status of Women on the importance of women's empowerment, noting that peace processes have been shown to be significantly more effective with women's involvement. The United Nations has been criticized, however, for restricting their attention to women as passive targets of extremism, when women have also actively worked in the leadership and in supportive roles of extremist groups. Increased focus has also fallen on the role of youth in preventing the spread of violent extremism, as they are especially vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment, particularly in conflict-torn regions where their future prospects are uncertain. The 2015 Global Youth Summit Against Violent Extremism adopted an action agenda highlighting this role, placing an emphasis on the importance of social media in the spread of violent extremism. Social media itself is an important aspect of this problem, as the Internet has become an effective tool for radicalization and recruitment. However, recent efforts have attempted to exploit the same qualities that make social media so effective in the spread of violent extremism to help counter and prevent it.

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

- How should the General Assembly address the relationship between women and violent extremism?
- What role do youth play in preventing and combating violent extremism?
- How can the international community combat the spread of violent extremism online?

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REVIEW OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE

One of the founding missions of the United Nations is to ensure international peace and security. The United Nations has used peacekeeping forces to that end since the first mission in the Middle East in 1948. These peacekeeping missions have evolved from mostly-unarmed observers and supporting personnel to an armed security force and finally to today's hybrid operations that support post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction. Despite these changes in structure, the prevailing reason for the missions remained the same: to defuse conflicts between Member States and support diplomatic resolution of conflicts. At the end of the Cold War, the nature of conflicts shifted. More conflicts were intrastate conflicts triggered by local unrest, and therefore, less able to be resolved through international means. These intrastate conflicts also endured much longer than the interstate conflicts of the Cold War era. This shift in the nature of conflict pushed the United Nations to adapt.

The response was to emphasize peacebuilding: rebuilding civil institutions while ensuring safety and security. Former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali placed peacebuilding firmly on the agenda with his 1992 report, *An Agenda for Peace*, as the United Nations looked toward a post-Cold War world and a decade marred with civil wars. The failures of the UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding architecture became especially apparent later that decade, following the heavily-criticized

response to the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the Bosnian civil war in 1995. In 2000, the UN Department of Peace Operations produced the Brahimi report, which called for greater clarity in peacekeeping operations as well as institutional changes.

At the 2005 World Summit, the General Assembly and the Security Council established the three entities that compose the modern peacebuilding architecture of the United Nations: the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office. The Peacebuilding Commission was established as an intergovernmental UN body to aid States emerging from conflicts and advise the Security Council and General Assembly. It is charged with identifying clear peacebuilding objectives and working closely with the UN operations in the field. The Peacebuilding Fund focuses on monitoring and evaluating potential conflicts while also raising funds for peacebuilding initiatives. These two arms are supported by the Support Office, which provides strategic advice and policy guidance to the Commission, helps administer the Fund, and educates the public on peacebuilding.

Over the following years, the new peacebuilding architecture saw progress, including success in supporting elections in Guinea-Bissau and establishing reintegration programs for combatants in Cote d'Ivoire. However, the peacebuilding architecture was not without flaws, and, in preparation for the General Assembly's ten-year review, the Advisory Group of Experts published a report in 2015 reviewing the effectiveness of the peacebuilding architecture. This report identified several flaws in the architecture, such as the short attention span of the international community and the instability of funding to peacebuilding operations. Its most important recommendation was to have the Commission bridge the gaps among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The Advisory Group noted that effective peacebuilding requires action spanning the purview of those three organs, but a lack of coherence resulted in a vastly unbalanced distribution of the UN's attention to different aspects of peacebuilding. In particular, the Advisory Group described the pattern as an "inverted U," with the majority of effort spent as a crisis flared, not on prevention before or rebuilding after.

In 2016, the Security Council and the General Assembly passed a joint review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, taking the Advisory Group report into strong consideration. In it, they reaffirm the necessity of levelling out the "inverted U" by adopting the Advisory Group's terminology of "sustaining peace" as the primary goal of peacebuilding. They also noted the problem of fragmentation of the UN system, and urged the Commission to connect the principal organs for peacebuilding activities, as well as to regularly meet with regional and subregional organizations to improve cooperation at those levels. The review also laid out several key priorities for the UN in their future efforts to maintain international peace and security, including increasing the Commission's emphasis on women's leadership and the integration of gender perspectives into conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategies. However, the review did not address the issue of funding, instead asking for a report from the Secretary-General on potential options. As the Fund currently depends on voluntary contributions, the Advisory Group had recommended providing a moderate baseline of funding from the budget of peacekeeping operations. This recommendation raised concerns about the Fund's flexibility, largely seen as one of its greatest strengths, as it would place the Fund under the purview of the Fifth Committee. Additionally, as development and peacebuilding are mutually beneficial, the review also encouraged cooperation between



peacebuilding programs and the World Bank—particularly the World Bank’s State and Peacebuilding Fund, established in 2008—however no real suggestions were made as to how this would be accomplished.

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

- How can the Peacebuilding Commission improve cooperation among the principal organs and with relevant peacebuilding organizations, such as the World Bank?
- Should the Peacebuilding Fund be funded through voluntary contributions from Member States, from the peacekeeping budget or through some other method?
- How can the United Nations better facilitate the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding?

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FIRST COMMITTEE

DISARMAMENT & INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

PURVIEW OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FIRST COMMITTEE

The General Assembly First Committee addresses the disarmament of conventional weapons, weapons of mass destruction and related international security questions. The First Committee makes recommendations on the regulation of these weapons as they relate to international peace and security. The First Committee does not consider legal issues surrounding weapons possession nor does it address complex peace and security issues addressed by the Security Council. For more information concerning the purview of the United Nations General Assembly as a whole, see page 29.

Website: www.un.org/ga/first/index.shtml

WOMEN, DISARMAMENT, NON-PROLIFERATION AND ARMS CONTROL

In 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which states that complete disarmament “will contribute to the attainment of full equality between men and women.” This declaration set a precedent for examining armed conflict as a community issue as well as a military one. Men make up the vast majority of combatants in armed conflicts, though the number of female combatants has grown. The conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has also highlighted the role that many women play in supporting armed combatants. In conflict resolutions where women are directly involved in negotiations, agreements are over 20 percent more likely to last longer than two years. Armed conflicts disproportionately affect women. Women and children compose 80 percent of refugee populations. In countries with armed conflict, maternal mortality rates are 2.5 times higher, the number of girls with primary education drops by almost 20 percent, and women’s likelihood of owning property decreases by half. Female combatants are targets for sexual assault and abuse and carry the burden of domestic needs for their fellow combatants. Yet, despite these effects, women and gender are addressed in less than a third of disarmament agreements.

In 2000, the Security Council passed a resolution encouraging Member States to mainstream gender perspectives in tackling conflict resolution. A 2004 Secretary-General report acknowledged progress toward integrating women in peace and security efforts through policy measures but noted the work that remained regarding the work of women in disarmament efforts on the ground. Some recommendations from that report came to fruition through a 2006 review of women’s contributions toward the implementation of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA), a foundational policy document in arms control. While the original Programme of Action provided detailed policy recommendations, it did not discuss how the illicit small arms trade affects women or what their role is in addressing disarmament. The report addressed this deficiency and the broader issue of integrating women into discussions on arms control and disarmament. The report created a set of guidelines on gender mainstreaming in four areas: women’s relevance in combating the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons; planning and implementation of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; national and regional focuses

and civil society integration and public awareness initiatives. These guidelines were reviewed again in 2010 and 2016 and have served as guides for efforts moving forward.

In 2010, the General Assembly passed the first resolution focused solely on the role that women play in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. It called attention to women’s contributions in practical disarmament in both regional and national spheres. Subsequent resolutions reaffirmed the General Assembly’s original position, though few additional recommendations were made until the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in 2013. The ATT serves as the primary international agreement to regulate the legal movement and transfer of arms both within and between countries. Article Seven identifies the connection between gender-based violence and international arms transfers, stating that any exporting State Party shall assess the risk of the arms being used to commit “gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children.” While this formalized the need to address gender in armed conflict, it did not fully address women’s participation at the negotiating table, the disproportionate effect of indirect violence and economic strife on women, or the need to confront cultural barriers to considering and incorporating women into disarmament measures, nor did it address the needs of women who are combatants.

The Security Council also passed a resolution in 2013 that notes the role of arms proliferation in gender-based violence, as well as the disproportionate effects of violence on women. The General Assembly continues to hear reports of how Member States are implementing disarmament policies as they relate to women, and recent resolutions have contained increasingly thorough recommendations for States and actors when including gender perspectives in the disarmament process, such as better understanding of the effects of violence on women and including them in the design and implementation of disarmament efforts. In its most recent resolutions, the General Assembly worked to strengthen its cooperation with local and regional organizations that help in armed conflict. These are also called disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs, these organizations focus on halting conflict and reintegrating persons and groups involved in armed conflict into society at large. The General Assembly has also asked States to increase spending on gender-based violence and armed conflict de-escalation policies and programs with a specific bent on the illicit trade of small arms and increasing women’s roles in disarmament negotiations. The PoA, ATT, and other United Nations initiatives continue to meet resistance in adoption and implementation for multiple reasons, most prominently that women are still largely unseen in conflict and cultural norms that preclude women’s participation in the negotiating processes.

Overall, progress on the topic remains slow, and while countries have made some progress at the State level, the United Nations continues to face both cultural and practical resistance to women’s inclusion in arms control. Without women at the table, conflict areas face two distinct realities: successful disarmament is significantly less likely, and the economic and physical needs of women, both armed and civilians, will go unacknowledged. DDR programs planned without women are significantly less likely to address the decrease in education and health care or the significant violence women face, including economic vulnerability



as a result of being refugees, the increased likelihood of human trafficking and the inability to provide income. The United Nations must come together to address the needs of women in disarmament and to overcome the systemic reasons women are not included in disarmament negotiations and illicit small arms trade preventions.

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

- How can Member States alleviate the barriers that prevent women from participating in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts?
- What practices should Member States and the United Nations consider to support greater participation of women in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs? How can the United Nations ensure that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs meet the unique needs of women?
- What policies and practices can Member States adopt to ensure that women are able to participate in discussions on disarmament and the illicit trade in small arms?

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COUNTERING THE THREAT POSED BY IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have a history that spans centuries. Today, IEDs include a broad range of devices, from crude bombs made using commercially available products to highly specialized systems capable of defeating advanced military armor and countermeasures. Use of IEDs became increasingly common throughout the past two decades as a cheap, easy option for non-state actors and were responsible for over 120,000 casualties in 68 countries between 2011 and 2016. IEDs have impacted the operations of the United Nations around the world, with attacks targeting United Nations' residences, offices and vehicles, with at least 38 attacks in 2015 alone. United Nations personnel and peacekeepers face limited supplies of armor and require training and medical support. With the ongoing proliferation and evolution of IEDs, Member States have increasingly sought the assistance of the international community to stem the flow of precursor materials and disrupt technology sharing between insurgent and terrorist groups.

Non-state actors use IEDs to inflict harm upon their opponents and to execute high-profile attacks that are difficult to detect and interrupt. Even crude IEDs are capable of degrading societal stability, security and economic activity. The increasingly prolific use of IEDs in war zones and the highly-publicized use of these weapons in the past two decades has ensured broad global concern over this problem. With criminals and terrorists unwilling to abide by international law and norms, much of the focus has been on detection of, prevention of and response to attacks.



The conflict in Iraq drove IED advancement considerably in the early 2000s. An arms race between military engineers and terrorist bomb makers ensued. To overcome these countermeasures, terrorist bombers shared their increasingly hard-to-defeat designs among themselves, ensuring IEDs constantly evolved. Two key technological advancements proved especially noteworthy: the use of explosively formed penetrators (EFPs) and the development of non-metallic IEDs. EFPs are capable of defeating many forms of armor and inflict great harm against well-defended targets. Once this technology was adopted by insurgent groups, it quickly became one of the most devastating types of IED. Nonmetallic IEDs began appearing in 2009 and are often able to pass through metal detectors and X-rays. These bombs can be smuggled aboard planes, into government offices or buried in roads awaiting their target. In 2015, the terrorist group Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula released a detailed explanation of the construction of these weapons. This ongoing evolution of the technology and design of IEDs and the sharing of these plans is an alarming trend that the international community seeks to arrest.

The United Nations has addressed the issue of IEDs through multiple channels, leveraging several international regimes governing conflict, small arms and terrorism. It first addressed the issue in 2009 through the Group of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) Amended Protocol II. These discussions identified prevention, protection, detection and clearance as key areas for mitigating the threat of IEDs. The participants also affirmed the role of the Amended Protocol II in regulating IEDs, finding that the use of these weapons as booby-traps or mines by non-state actors often caused unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering to combatants and civilians. The recommendations stressed information sharing on countermeasures, ammunition stockpile management, and import and export controls. The United Nations found that IED attacks are not mere attacks of opportunity but usually involve long-term leadership, planning, financing, construction and targeting.

The United Nations has used existing bodies and regulations to curtail the use of IEDs. Supporting national and international law enforcement, particularly the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), has been a common approach. In 2015, INTERPOL hosted the inaugural International Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Leaders' Forum to encourage component controls, capacity building, public awareness and information sharing. INTERPOL also created Project Watchmaker, a data collection effort targeting IED technologies, precursor materials, and individuals and groups constructing and using IEDs. This project joins INTERPOL's Chemical Anti-Smuggling Enforcement (CHASE) and Chemical Risk Identification and Mitigation Project (CRIMP) as international organizations and Member States target smugglers, precursor materials, and persons to combat the criminal and terrorist use of IEDs outside of warzones. Since 2010, the World Customs Organization, INTERPOL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime partnered to create Programme Global Shield, designed to provide training, technical assistance, and real-time information and intelligence sharing focused on 14 precursor chemicals. The first three years of this program led to the discovery and seizure of over 60 IEDs, 194 metric tons of solid precursors and 50 arrests.

In areas of elevated or active hostilities, law enforcement and other government forces may be overwhelmed, under-resourced or even complicit in the use of IEDs against unlawful targets. Weak or complicit States are attractive for IED manufacturers and smugglers, allowing these actors to research, test, train, construct, transport and employ these weapons. How to best deal with remote havens remains a difficult question for the United Nations and is especially important when peacekeepers are present. Going forward, the General Assembly must strengthen information sharing and coordination amongst Member States, international organizations and commercial partners. The 2016 report of the Secretary-General recommends building on the success of CHASE, CRIMP and Global Shield toward a unified regulatory system for key IED components and increasing contributions by Member States to developing countries and countries recovering from conflict in managing their weapons and ammunition stockpiles.

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

- How can Member States work together to improve regulation of the transfer of arms, military equipment, and goods and technology that can be used in IED manufacturing?
- How can the United Nations balance the important role and mission of United Nations' peacekeepers and personnel and the threat of IEDs? What level of risk should be tolerated, and how can it be best managed?
- How can the success of CHASE, CRIMP and Global Shield translate to a global regulatory regime? What best practices in customs and law enforcement activities will have the most outsized effect in preventing the diversion of precursor materials?

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SECOND COMMITTEE

ECONOMIC & FINANCIAL

PURVIEW OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SECOND COMMITTEE

The General Assembly Second Committee addresses the economic development of Member States and the stability and growth of international financial and trade networks. The Second Committee deals solely with the economic development of Member States and addresses State-to-State assistance. It does not set or discuss the budget of the United Nations, which is solely addressed by the Fifth Committee. The Second Committee also does not address social issues that affect development; such issues are considered by the Third Committee. For more information concerning the purview of the United Nations General Assembly as a whole, see page 29.

Website: www.un.org/ga/second/index.shtml

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

The increasing devastation caused by natural disasters, such as hurricanes, droughts, floods and earthquakes, has drawn new attention to disaster risk reduction (DRR) methods. According to a United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) assessment, disasters cause between 250 billion and 300 billion USD in annual losses. In addition to their immediate effects, these disasters have lasting effects on economic development. Such economic setbacks present immense challenges for sustainable development; climate change and urbanization will only increase the frequency and intensity of natural disasters in the future. Urbanization, in particular, exacerbates the effects of natural disasters, even in the developed world, where dense population and high capital investment are concentrated in one location, often on the coast or in other vulnerable areas. The goals of DRR methods commonly include improving disaster preparedness, reducing exposure and vulnerability to hazards, and making Member States and their governments more aware of the consequences of land management and development.

The United Nations focused on this issue by declaring the 1990s the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. In 1994, a collection of Member States and others met in Yokohama, Japan for the First World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR). At this meeting, the participants memorialized their commitment to reducing the impact of natural disasters in the ten principles of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World. These principles emphasized key components of any DRR strategy, from ensuring environmental protection to maintaining cooperation at all levels. In 1999, the General Assembly established the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) to coordinate DRR efforts and manage the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the United Nations' DRR strategy that ran parallel to the Yokohama Strategy.

In 2005 the international community met in Kobe, Japan, to revisit the Yokohama Strategy and prepare a strategy for the following ten years. This Second World Conference produced the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), the United Nations first multi-sector plan focused on reducing loss from disasters. Significantly, the Framework's five priorities for action place emphasis on the State having the primary responsibility to reduce disaster risk, with the expectation of cooperation between

local governments and the private sector. Meeting just a month after the devastating 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the Framework advocated for implementation of the International Early Warning Programme.

Disaster risk reduction saw continued focus in the United Nations system in the years following the Second World Conference. At the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, participants recognized the importance of DRR and the link between DRR and sustainable development. In its outcome document, *The Future We Want*, Member States identified DRR as a crucial step for poverty-eradication and sustainable development plans. The United Nations also recognized the need for a higher-level program to address gaps in the DRR framework, addressing those in the 2013 the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, which identified "resilience" as the overarching goal of not only DRR, but of poverty-reduction, climate-change efforts and a host of other development goals.

In 2015, UNISDR organized a third World Conference in Sendai to update the Hyogo Framework. The Sendai Framework, the outcome of this conference, set forth the United Nations' goals for future milestones concerning disaster risk reduction with four priority areas, addressing issues from improved preparedness to ensuring effective reconstruction efforts.

In 2015 the General Assembly also concluded negotiations on and announced the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals are the successor to the Millennium Development Goals. In that negotiation, Member States acknowledged that previous development efforts had not holistically considered the role that social and environmental issues, like disaster risk reduction, play in sustainable development. In the new framework, Goal 11's targets include significantly reducing global losses, both in lives and in infrastructure, due to natural disasters. With the transition to the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations also recognized the increasing importance of private investors and other development partners, as private investments had surged past foreign aid in the previous years.

Climate change management is also a crucial factor in disaster risk reduction. While the 2015 Paris Agreement demonstrated the growing concern about climate change among the international community, Member States must remain committed to restraining the rise in global temperatures and the goal of holding the global average temperature increase to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels; in many cases current State policies are insufficient to meet this goal. This is especially important for development programs in landlocked countries or countries that otherwise are more insulated from the worst effects of global climate change.

Disaster risk reduction plays a central role in sustainable development and building resilience. Natural disasters, at a minimum, disrupt ongoing development efforts, and, at their worst, can destroy previous progress and create new challenges for a region. If the Post-2015 Development Agenda is to be achieved, substantial progress will be necessary on improving disaster risk reduction in the developing world.



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

- How can Member States work together to mitigate the impact of cross-border disasters, such as famines in neighboring countries?
- Where are there possibilities for effective regional cooperation?
- How can the United Nations support capacity building and planning efforts at the national and subnational level?
- How will increased development, increasing urbanization, and worsening climate change affect future needs for disaster risk reduction?

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INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SYSTEM AND DEVELOPMENT

The modern international finance system dates back to the Bretton Woods Conference in July 1944. The Conference sought to create an organized global financial system following World War II, with the aim of achieving post-war prosperity through economic cooperation and learning from the mistakes made during the Great Depression. The Bretton Woods system produced by this Conference established two lending agencies to assist in global reconstruction efforts and fixed international exchange rates to the US dollar and the price of gold. In 1947, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade set standards of free

trade in the post-war financial system; it would eventually be replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The core international financial institutions (IFIs) of the Bretton Woods system were the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which would later expand to become the World Bank Group, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The World Bank Group continues the IBRD's core function of providing loans and financing for development projects, and, additionally, holds and participates in conferences at various levels to spread knowledge about effective development. In contrast, the IMF does not directly support development projects, but rather provides loans to assist countries in meeting their financial obligations. Both the World Bank Group and the IMF also work with states to inform policies and provide technical assistance.

The role of the Bretton Woods institutions has changed over time, especially after 1971, when the United States abandoned the gold standard. In their responses to a series of economic crises in Latin America in the 1980s, the international financial institutions coalesced around a set of economic ideas for developing economies in crisis. This Washington Consensus prioritized investment in infrastructure and other pro-growth institutions and trade liberalization. In 1998, the General Assembly thanked the Bretton Woods institutions for their work in reducing volatility; the General Assembly also outlined problems in the intersection of the international financial system and development. It highlighted the instability caused by fluctuating exchange rates—which were fixed under the original Bretton Woods agreement. Additionally, it called for strengthened international cooperation to prevent future currency crises, broader access to private capital flows for developing countries and the inclusion of developing countries in the international economic decision-making process.

The Consensus guided policy advice up through the early 2000s, however, the influence of the IFIs was on the decline. The Center of Economic Policy and Research criticized the IMF's responses to the 1998 Asian financial crisis and the 2002 Argentine debt crisis as being overly political, charges that would be repeated again during the 2008 financial crisis. The 2008 financial crisis was a major test of the Bretton Woods institutions' capabilities, as it threatened to reverse development progress in developing countries and heavily destabilized the financial systems of even highly-developed countries. The IMF undertook a variety of reforms in response to the crisis and, by 2016, had provided over 700 billion in financing.

With the recent focus on sustainable development, the international financial system and the Bretton Woods institutions see their role shifting toward promoting sustainable development, especially among least developed countries. In 2015, the General Assembly adopted the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which included in its action areas domestic and international private business and finance, and international trade as engines for development. The Action Agenda asks the Bretton Woods institutions to work together with the UN system to oversee debt obligations and watch for unsustainable financial situations as well as provide financial support to sustainable development projects in developing countries. Additionally, Sustainable Development Goal 17 calls for assistance to developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies for debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring as well as addressing the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress. To ensure effective



implementation, a group of scientists and experts selected by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon are charged with drafting a Global Sustainable Development Report by 2019.

With the declining influence of the Washington Consensus, parts of the Bretton Woods institutions have lost influence since the turn of the century. In particular, the IFIs are hampered by accusations of prioritizing Western economic and political ideals over effective assistance, an image not helped by the long streak of US bankers and politicians as presidents of the World Bank. The international financial system is continuing to undergo reforms in response to the 2008 financial crisis; the IMF in 2016 adjusted its allocation of votes to increase the voice of rising economies. The financial crisis and changing financial landscape will require additional changes to the international financial system to ensure stability and continued effectiveness, however, continued cooperation among Member States will be needed to promote coherence in financial reforms and regulations. Additionally, the success of development efforts will require cooperation between Bretton Woods and the regional development banks and financial institutions. Ensuring sustainable development when evaluating development plans is also important, as the SDGs will require an estimated 5-7 trillion USD per year in investments to achieve. Unsustainable development is still receiving substantial investment as well, with current trends expected to destroy a tenth of global natural wealth by 2030 through environmental deterioration; for example, in 2015 about 6 trillion USD was invested in high-polluting energy generation.

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

- How can international financial institutions balance national sovereignty and political and economic goals?
- How do regional financial institutions fit into the Bretton Woods system?
- What can be done to shield development efforts from future economic crises?
- How can financial institutions be incentivized to focus on sustainability?
- How can the General Assembly encourage the stability of domestic financial institutions and establish their role with respect to multinational institutions like the IMF?

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIRD COMMITTEE

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN & CULTURAL

PURVIEW OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIRD COMMITTEE

While the Third Committee's work often overlaps with other United Nations organs, the Third Committee focuses its discussions on social, humanitarian and cultural concerns that arise in the General Assembly. Human rights, education and cultural preservation are typical issues for the Third Committee. The Third Committee would not discuss the legal implications of human rights matters as those are discussed by the Sixth Committee. The Committee also does not call for special studies or deploy monitors; those tasks are handled by the Human Rights Council. For more information concerning the purview of the United Nations General Assembly as a whole, see page 29.

Website: www.un.org/ga/third/index.shtml

IMPROVING THE COORDINATION OF EFFORTS AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Human trafficking is present in every country and poses a vital threat to human rights and dignity. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that, at any given point in time, 21,000 victims have reported cases across 111 countries. This does not include the vast number of victims whose cases go unreported. Estimates place the value of human trafficking at \$32 billion. Forced labor and sex trafficking are the two largest reasons for human trafficking; however, the United Nations also reports on trafficking for organ harvesting, illegal adoption and child marriage. Victims of human trafficking are often malnourished, deprived of personal space and privacy, prostituted or otherwise abused and refused any payment for their work. Human trafficking disproportionately affects women—over two-thirds of reported victims are women. The vast majority of traffickers are men. Criminal impunity is a major challenge: when apprehended, traffickers are rarely prosecuted. Trafficked persons, particularly those trafficked in the sex industry and those trafficked across borders, are often imprisoned and prosecuted rather than given care and services to return home safely and recover from trauma.

While human trafficking is a long-standing problem that exploits the economically and socially vulnerable, response efforts remain largely uncoordinated. The Third Committee has pursued both horizontal coordination—coordination among similar groups—and vertical coordination—coordination among groups with differing levels of authority. Many issues related to trafficking result from this lack of coordination. In particular, the inability to accurately report its prevalence, inconsistency in punishment and the inability of organizations to work together on cases are fundamental issues preventing the international community's effectiveness. As a result, human trafficking not only remains, it has the opportunity to thrive.

In 1999, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in conjunction with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, launched the Global Programme Against Trafficking in Human Beings (GPAT). GPAT emphasized the importance of "technical cooperation" between Member States, highlighting the importance of developing the legal and operational resources necessary for identifying and prosecuting trafficking offenders. Though it has largely

focused on fixing information and data collection issues, those efforts have revealed how disparate the different issues in human trafficking are between regions, countries and population demographics. The GPAT led directly to the increase of reporting, but didn't fix one of the most fundamental problems contributing to human trafficking and impunity: countries did not agree to universal definitions of human trafficking. This is a persistent problem. In many countries, indentured servitude, child marriage and other forms of trafficking are not considered to be trafficking, and national legislation is weak or nonexistent. The request for increased technical cooperation, and the capacity-building assistance that accompanied the request, helped to increase effective prosecution. However, cultural mores still prevent the effective reporting and enforcement of the issue, particularly in transnational crimes in which Member States have differing opinions.

The next decade saw incremental changes to coordinating efforts, but the UNODC called attention back to the lack of coordination in the human trafficking crisis in 2006, leading to the creation of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT). Prior to ICAT and still today, many criminal systems prosecuted trafficking victims for the acts they were forced to commit. Within ICAT, associated organizations stressed the importance for a "holistic" approach to fighting the hidden movement of people at a local and regional level. This meant increasing legislative action, prosecuting traffickers, and creating medical and judicial systems that supported rather than punished trafficking victims. Through this work, the approach of anti-trafficking actions began to develop a broader scope that encompasses the role of law enforcement officers and medical care workers in identifying and protecting victims of trafficking. ICAT was further strengthened in 2010 with the creation of a Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The General Assembly has focused on improving the conditions under which United Nations committees and other international organizations can better communicate and share information while emphasizing the importance of recognizing human trafficking as an affront to international human rights. This requires all Member States cooperate and conform to some level of legislative consistency and effective enforcement. In addition to cultural differences, some Member States resist sharing criminal information, either because they fear interference or because information sharing is a politically fraught action to begin with. The United Nations has also pushed for public awareness campaigns. These are meant to help victims speak out, to give citizens the tools necessary to help victims and to increase awareness of new victim protections. This key part of the issue had been scarce in previous, less holistic approaches.

The most recent of several High-Level Meetings of the United Nations General Assembly on the Appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons was held in 2013. The United Nations' most recent work has focused on strategy and policy development, legislative assistance, capacity building, regional and transregional cooperation, protection and assistance to victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants, and assistance and support to children. The basis for this work is the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and



the Smuggling of Migrants (GloACT), a four-year cooperative initiative that started in 2015. There have already been several events aimed at better coordinating international efforts to address this crisis, including a Special High-Level Event in February. One of the most significant events is the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, which increases global awareness of this problem.

Human trafficking remains one of the most difficult issues facing the international community. While the United Nations has adopted a more holistic approach that provides services rather than punishment for the victims of human trafficking and that incorporates law enforcement, medical professionals and the broader community, Member States still struggle with a lack of information. Recent efforts to view and treat trafficking victims as victims rather than perpetrators of crimes they do not choose to commit is at best indicative of shifts in mindset and at worst a moral victory for the United Nations. Intergovernmental cooperation and information sharing is still scarce and often Member States lack the resources or political will to comply with the numerous action plans and protocols put forward. The Third Committee must find ways to reinforce their holistic approach and to help Member States adopt congruent ideas of what human trafficking is, how to treat victims and when and how to best report and cooperate on human trafficking cases. Without these changes, millions of men, women and children annually will continue to be abused and exploited.

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

- What communication barriers exist preventing information exchanges, particularly on known and suspected traffickers and trafficking cases? How can the United Nations encourage the exchange of this information?
- What steps can the international community take to ensure that traffickers are prosecuted?
- What legal and other resources do States need to better combat trafficking?

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THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION

Water is one of the most fundamental human needs, yet 884 million people lack access to safe drinking water. This poses a serious threat to human health and human dignity, as well as presenting a barrier to economic and social development. Industrial contamination, climate change and infrastructure neglect create increasingly urgent problems for millions of people. Lack of proper sanitation is one of the largest causes for drinking water contamination. Forty percent of the population worldwide lives with insufficient sanitation procedures, primarily in the form of living without bathrooms or latrines. This population is one of the poorest and most vulnerable and risks disease and death due to drinking water contamination.

As a health issue, lack of infrastructure is one of the key contributors to insufficient access to clean water and sanitation. Waste and garbage leach toxins and spread dangerous bacteria like cholera, dysentery and E. coli. They can also cause parasitic infection in populations. Existing infrastructure is often worn down, made with potentially hazardous materials like lead and often vulnerable to natural disaster. Increasing the number of sanitation facilities and the quality of infrastructure has been a long-standing goal of the United Nations. However, the costs of replacing, installing and updating infrastructure is extremely expensive and without much return on investment. This leads to prolonged use of worn systems and can place a disproportionate amount of the costs on low-income users who are at the highest risk, including cost per use or increased service costs and taxes that low-income users simply cannot afford to pay. As a result, even when facilities for clean water and sanitation are in place, many are forced to still use old systems or to make hours-long trips to wells or springs, or to use insufficient sanitation facilities. Once in place, getting people to use the infrastructure and facilities is difficult as well. Public awareness about how waste can spread illness to drinking water and how to access potable water is a key to effectively increasing access to both.



The first actionable plan to address clean water and sanitation was developed at the United Nations Water Conference in 1977. The Conference aimed to assess the status of water access and water usage, avoid a global water crisis, and monitor water use with regard to natural hazards, health and pollution control. The Conference laid the base framework for global water policy and water management, and is still used as a starting point for State policies. The Conference resolutions and final report committed Members to improving water quality and sanitation standards by 1990. This led directly to the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade of 1981-1990. The decade focused international attention on ensuring reasonable access to safe water supplies and focused on areas without adequate sanitation facilities. These policies still allowed for Member States to charge users for access to clean water and for infrastructure development.

The 1992 Dublin Statement laid out four guidelines for Member States at the local, national and international levels. These guidelines include: States should use a holistic approach to water management; development should be participatory and include members of relevant communities from the bottom up; women are integral to the safeguarding of water; and though water is a human right, it should also be recognized as an economic good. The Dublin Statement contributed to the move toward sustainable usage of water and the related actions that helped to reverse trends of over consumption, pollution, and rising threats from drought and floods. Sustainable water and sanitation systems were also included in the Agenda 21, the outcome document of the 1992 Earth Summit.

In 2003, the United Nations declared the International Year of Freshwater, increasing awareness and changing individual behaviors in water use, sanitation and hygiene; mobilized participation of communities; set national targets and plans to generate investment; and increased regulatory framework enforcement for water management that take into account both public health and ecosystem needs. In 2005, the United Nations began the International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' 2005-2015. Its goal was to promote efforts to fulfill international commitments in policies on water. The campaign helped to bridge cooperation between governments over international water disputes and for commitments made between diverse internal groups, but has only begun the steps to bridge economic interests and public need. The cooperation balanced economic interests, the needs of the ecosystem and the needs of people in poverty.

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly declared access to safe drinking water and sanitation a human right. This was a direct result of a 2008 United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights initiative that examined safe drinking water and sanitation as a human right and that called for a Special Rapporteur on the issue. Declaring access to safe drinking water and sanitation a human right ensures that States are obligated to provide clean drinking water and sanitation to their citizens. Legally, this should include providing equal access to both and preventing unreasonable barriers to access. The legal precedent for this set forth in the Dublin Statement, however, does not define affordability; the United Nations has a suggested limitation of less than three percent of household income going towards water and sanitation. Because utility companies have significantly more political power than citizens, particularly among low-income persons, policies have not caught up to this standard. While some areas have found community-led sanitation projects effective, they are not universally available or practical.

Currently there is more than enough fresh water on the planet to adequately provide for water needs but, due to unproductive economies and poor infrastructure, millions of people die from inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene each year. Since 1990, 2.1 billion people have gained access to improved sanitation facilities, but many are still under threat from drought and water shortages, inadequate infrastructure, environmental contamination and natural disaster. While the United Nations has focused on public awareness, the infrastructure investments, public education campaigns and open access to water all require vast amounts of money and urgently need to be completed. Some Member States, however, are reluctant to spend that money, are unable to complete these projects independently or are simply unable to focus on the issue due to geopolitical conflict. Eighty percent of human water waste is discharged into rivers or the sea without any pollution removal. This contamination and climate change create increasingly expensive projects to which many cannot afford access. Without legal systems to fix these barriers, both physical and financial, people worldwide will be denied the water they need to live.

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

- What policies and programs can States implement to ensure the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation?
- With safe drinking water and sanitation as a human right, what responsibility do States and the private sector have to protect the natural environment and their natural water supplies?
- How can States best address issues of natural water scarcity?
- How does the privatization of water supplies and infrastructure impact the human right to safe drinking water?

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