



# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## 69TH SESSION ISSUES BOOK

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL ERA  
ELABORATING ON SEXUAL RIGHTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST  
69TH SESSION



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

69TH ANNUAL SESSION

OUR COMMON HUMANITY: BACK TO THE PRINCIPLES OF  
THE UN CHARTER

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS ONE OF THE SIX PRINCIPAL ORGANS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1945 UNDER THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS. THE ASSEMBLY CONSISTS OF ALL UN MEMBER STATES AND MAY DISCUSS ANY QUESTIONS OR MATTERS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE CHARTER OR RELATING TO THE POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF ANY ORGAN PROVIDED FOR IN THE CHARTER. IT MAY MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO UN MEMBERS OR THE SECURITY COUNCIL OR BOTH ON ANY SUCH QUESTIONS OR MATTERS, EXCEPT DISPUTES OR SITUATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH THE SECURITY COUNCIL IS CURRENTLY EXERCISING ITS FUNCTIONS.

AT MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONSIDERS TWO AGENDA ITEMS AND ALSO ENGAGES IN A HIGH-LEVEL EVENT OR SPECIAL SESSION AS DETERMINED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. THE TITLE OF THIS SESSION IS INTRODUCED IN THE WEEKS LEADING UP TO CONFERENCE AND TESTS DELEGATES' ABILITY TO WORK ON THE BASIS ON CONSENSUS. IN ADDITION TO VOTING ON ITS OWN RESOLUTIONS, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTES TO APPROVE THE OUTCOME DOCUMENTS OF ITS SUBCOMMITTEES AT THE CLOSING PLENARY SESSION ON THE FINAL DAY OF CONFERENCE.

(UN HANDBOOK, 2017-18)

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# FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL ERA

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ISSUES BOOK  
JUDY SMITH – HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY

According to Article I of the UN Charter, the purpose of the United Nations is “to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of ... common ends.”<sup>1</sup>

Technology and social media, increasing the proliferation of “fake news” and propaganda, make harmonization and cooperation impractical and cause deeper divides between developed states and developing states. In addition, disinformation campaigns rob citizens of the ability to obtain factual information and identify accurate sources. Propaganda and “fake news” represent an obstacle for global youth in attaining an authentic perspective on foreign relations, preventing the attainment of lasting peace and international cooperation in the next generation. Furthermore, the concept of information sovereignty, especially in an increasingly globalized world, is complex. Freedom of information and access to technology, however, are not new topics in the UN.

## THE ROLE OF NAM

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is an international, non-governmental organization (NGO) promoting the interests of developing states. NAM was founded in 1961,<sup>2</sup> but the organization’s concern with mass media began at their 1973 meeting in Algiers.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the meeting provided a basis for the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO) to compose the Mass Media Declaration of 1974. The document attempted to even the playing field

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<sup>1</sup> (1945, OCTOBER 24). CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS - K UN.ORG. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/EN/CHARTER-UNITED-NATIONS/](http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/)

<sup>2</sup> (N.D.). NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT | INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION | BRITANNICA.COM. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.BRITANNICA.COM/TOPIC/NON-ALIGNED-MOVEMENT](https://www.britannica.com/topic/non-aligned-movement)

<sup>3</sup> (N.D.). NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER (NWICO) NWICO.HTML. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.THEGRENADAREVOLUTIONONLINE.COM/NWICO.HTML](https://www.thegrenadarevolutiononline.com/nwico.html)



of international media by encouraging the participation of the public in both developed and developing states. It is estimated that the “big four” news agencies, United Press International (U.S.), Associated Press (U.S.), Reuters (U.K.), and Agence France Presse (France), supply over 90% of the world’s printed foreign news.<sup>4</sup> Developing countries are often the substance of news, not the producers of news. The dominance of highly-developed states in the news and media arena produce a skewed international image. When UNESCO released its Declaration, opposition and criticism immediately arose in the West and little progress was made to assuage the disparity between developed and developing states in the media.<sup>5</sup> However, in that same year, the New International Economic Order (NIEO) was founded. The economic interests of developing states, such as renegotiation of debts, effective trade agreements, using funds from disarmament for development, and assistance in attaining development, are promoted through the NIEO.<sup>6</sup> The Declaration and the NIEO sewed the seeds of targeted action to address freedom of information.

## THE FOUNDING OF NWICO

At the 1975 Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries in Lima, NAM members adopted a resolution entitled “Cooperation in the Field of Diffusion of Information and Mass Communications Media.”<sup>7</sup> However, progress on the solidification and promotion of the ideals of developing states in regard to freedom of information and technology was truly born in

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<sup>4</sup> (1981, JUNE 1). THE BIG FOUR | NEW INTERNATIONALIST. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://NEWINT.ORG/FEATURES/1981/06/01/FOUR](https://newint.org/features/1981/06/01/FOUR)

<sup>5</sup> (2013, JULY 16). THE NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND ... - ACADEMIA.EDU. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.ACADEMIA.EDU/4041289/THE\\_NEW\\_WORLD\\_INFORMATION\\_AND\\_COMMUNICATION\\_ORDER\\_NWICO\\_IN\\_THE\\_CONTEXT\\_OF\\_THE\\_INFORMATION\\_SUPER-HIGHWAY](http://www.academia.edu/4041289/THE_NEW_WORLD_INFORMATION_AND_COMMUNICATION_ORDER_NWICO_IN_THE_CONTEXT_OF_THE_INFORMATION_SUPER-HIGHWAY)

<sup>6</sup> (1978, JANUARY 1). THE OBJECTIVES OF THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER - ELSEVIER. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.ELSEVIER.COM/BOOKS/THE-OBJECTIVES-OF-THE-NEW-INTERNATIONAL-ECONOMIC-ORDER/LASZLO/978-0-08-023697-1](https://www.elsevier.com/books/the-objectives-of-the-new-international-economic-order/laszlo/978-0-08-023697-1)

<sup>7</sup> (2010, NOVEMBER 19). THE NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER: TESTIMONY OF .... RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.UTA.FI/CMT/EN/CONTACT/STAFF/KAARLENORDENSTRENG/PUBLICATIONS/PARIS.PDF](http://www.uta.fi/CMT/EN/CONTACT/STAFF/KAARLENORDENSTRENG/PUBLICATIONS/PARIS.PDF)

the NAM meetings of 1976 in Tunis and, later, in 1976 in New Delhi.<sup>8</sup> Developing states wished for a kind of “new world order” in the media and Tunisia’s Information Minister, Mustapha Masmoudi, lead the charge in formalizing the ideals of NAM members.<sup>9</sup> The document that resulted, known as the New Delhi Declaration, “not only advocated political pressure against ‘imperialist forces’ dominating the ‘free world’ information structures and flows but also implied a fundamental philosophical challenge.”<sup>10</sup> In fact, the New Delhi Declaration made surprising implications. Laissez-faire philosophy in the information arena was asserted as the catalyst to the monopolization of media and the strengthening of developing states’ dependence. The document also noted the insufficiency of formal guarantees to freedom of information without the additional guarantee of technology, such as telecommunications and computers, to utilize that freedom. Finally, the Declaration insisted on the objectivity and accuracy of all information disseminated by the media.<sup>11</sup> Upon completion, the New Delhi Declaration was submitted to the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, better known as the MacBride Commission. At the time, the MacBride Commission was a 16-member UNESCO organization tasked with analyzing international communication concerns.<sup>12</sup> The MacBride Report, entitled “Many Voices, One World,” was issued in 1980.<sup>13</sup> Recommendations of the report included integrating communication into development, strengthening cultural identity, increasing access to technical information, protecting responsible journalists, and supporting

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<sup>8</sup> (N.D.). NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER (NWICO) NWICO.HTML. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.THEGRENADAREVOLUTIONONLINE.COM/NWICO.HTML](https://www.thegrenadarevolutiononline.com/nwico.html)

<sup>9</sup> (N.D.). NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER (NWICO) NWICO.HTML. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.THEGRENADAREVOLUTIONONLINE.COM/NWICO.HTML](https://www.thegrenadarevolutiononline.com/nwico.html)

<sup>10</sup> (2010, NOVEMBER 19). THE NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER: TESTIMONY OF .... RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.UTA.FI/CMT/EN/CONTACT/STAFF/KAARLENORDENSTRENG/PUBLICATIONS/PARIS.PDF](http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/kaarlenordenstreng/publications/paris.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> (2010, NOVEMBER 19). THE NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER: TESTIMONY OF .... RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.UTA.FI/CMT/EN/CONTACT/STAFF/KAARLENORDENSTRENG/PUBLICATIONS/PARIS.PDF](http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/kaarlenordenstreng/publications/paris.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> (N.D.). NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER (NWICO) NWICO.HTML. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.THEGRENADAREVOLUTIONONLINE.COM/NWICO.HTML](https://www.thegrenadarevolutiononline.com/nwico.html)

<sup>13</sup> (N.D.). NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER (NWICO) NWICO.HTML. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.THEGRENADAREVOLUTIONONLINE.COM/NWICO.HTML](https://www.thegrenadarevolutiononline.com/nwico.html)

integration and participation while bolstering communication capacities.<sup>14</sup> The document also spoke of a “new world information and communication order,” which encompassed the concerns and recommendations listed in the report.

Resolution 4/19 adopted by the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the UNESCO General Conference in Belgrade, 1980, legitimized the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The resolution laid the foundation for and restricted the definition of NWICO. The primary concerns, as stated in Resolution 4/19, are as follows:

- I. Eradication of imbalances and inequalities in communication,
- II. Elimination of the negative consequences of monopolies in communication,
- III. Destruction of impediments to freedom of information, especially in regard to increasing the spread and balance of information,
- IV. Increasing the number of sources of information,
- V. Ensuring freedom of the press
- VI. Ensuring the freedom and responsibility of journalists,
- VII. Providing technology and training, improving infrastructure, and assisting states in bolstering local media sources to enhance information self-reliance,
- VIII. Encouraging developed states to aid developing states in attaining these objectives,
- IX. Enforcing the right of states to express and educate the world of its own interests and culture,
- X. Supporting the right of all peoples to engage in international communication on the basis of equality, justice, and mutual benefit,

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<sup>14</sup> (1980). MANY VOICES, ONE WORLD: TOWARDS A NEW MORE ... - UN-DOCUMENTS.NET. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.UN-DOCUMENTS.NET/MACBRIDE-REPORT.PDF](http://www.un-documents.net/macbride-report.pdf)

XI. And promoting the right of individuals, ethnic groups, and social groups to have access to information, as well as the right to communicate.<sup>15</sup>

Many of the foundational NWICO ideas were first expressed in Masmoudi's New Delhi Declaration, but NWICO became embodied in the MacBride Commission. In fact, NWICO is not only the term for an idea, it has become a second name for the MacBride Commission itself. While NAM members were in support of NWICO policy, in general, western states were not.<sup>16</sup> NWICO represents a challenge to the status quo; it is a "new world order." Therefore, NWICO also represents a diminishment of the influence of developed states and world powers. If developing states have their own media sources, it is much more difficult for developed states to control international views. In addition, while official UNESCO policy did not support censorship or state-controlled media, some western states interpreted NWICO policy as such and refused to support NWICO.<sup>17</sup>

Over decades, UNESCO has become less central to NWICO. Today, UNESCO focuses on developing infrastructure and technology, providing training, and disseminating media education in developing states. In the research arena, UNESCO studies the international balance of the flow of information. UNESCO's efforts today are less controversial than its actions in the name of NWICO.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, NGOs have since adopted the NWICO doctrine. The National Lawyers Guild, the Institute for Latin America (IPAL), the World Association for Christian

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<sup>15</sup> (1980, OCTOBER). UNESCO. GENERAL CONFERENCE; 21ST; RECORDS OF THE ... - UNESDOC. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTP://UNESDOC.UNESCO.ORG/IMAGES/0011/001140/114029E.PDF](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001140/114029E.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> (N.D.). NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER (NWICO) NWICO.HTML. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.THEGRENADAREVOLUTIONONLINE.COM/NWICO.HTML](https://www.thegrenadarevolutiononline.com/nwico.html)

<sup>17</sup> (N.D.). NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER (NWICO) NWICO.HTML. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.THEGRENADAREVOLUTIONONLINE.COM/NWICO.HTML](https://www.thegrenadarevolutiononline.com/nwico.html)

<sup>18</sup> (2013, JULY 16). THE NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND ... - ACADEMIA.EDU. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.ACADEMIA.EDU/4041289/THE\\_NEW\\_WORLD\\_INFORMATION\\_AND\\_COMMUNICATION\\_ORDER\\_NWICO\\_IN\\_THE\\_CONTEXT\\_OF\\_THE\\_INFORMATION\\_SUPER-HIGHWAY](http://www.academia.edu/4041289/The_New_World_Information_and_Communication_Order_NWICO_in_the_Context_of_the_Information_Super-Highway)

Communication (WACC), and the Union for Democratic Communication (UDC) are just a few examples.<sup>19</sup>

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Freedom of information is not just a developing-world versus developed-world battle. When Russia launched Sputnik in 1957, Russian scholars pointed to the implications of satellite technology for international communication, “With the help of a large Sputnik, Moscow television programs could easily be relayed not alone to any point in the Soviet Union, but also far beyond its borders.”<sup>20</sup> To prevent international issues of propaganda broadcasting, UNESCO adopted, with a vote 55 to 7 with 22 abstentions, the “Declaration of Guiding Principles on the Use of Satellite Broadcasting for the Free Flow of Information, the Spread of Education and Greater Cultural Change” on 15 November 1972.<sup>21</sup> Not even the world superpowers of the time agreed with the declaration, however. The United States voted against the proposal while the Soviet Union was among the abstentions.<sup>22</sup>

## INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY

An underlying theme in NWICO and the reason for polarity in topics related to freedom of information is information sovereignty. To be explicit, sovereignty refers to “the supreme powers exercised by a state over its own members” and “the powers exercised by an autonomous

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<sup>19</sup> (2013, JULY 16). THE NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND ... - ACADEMIA.EDU. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.ACADEMIA.EDU/4041289/THE\\_NEW\\_WORLD\\_INFORMATION\\_AND\\_COMMUNICATION\\_ORDER\\_NWICO\\_IN\\_THE\\_CONTEXT\\_OF\\_THE\\_INFORMATION\\_SUPER-HIGHWAY](http://www.academia.edu/4041289/THE_NEW_WORLD_INFORMATION_AND_COMMUNICATION_ORDER_NWICO_IN_THE_CONTEXT_OF_THE_INFORMATION_SUPER-HIGHWAY)

<sup>20</sup> NORDENSTRENG, K., & SCHILLER, H. I. (1979). *NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION*. NORWOOD, N.J: ALEX PUB. CO.

<sup>21</sup> (1970, DECEMBER 18). INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY REVIEWED. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WEB.URI.EDU/IAICS/FILES/10-WENXIANG-GONG.PDF](https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/10-wenxiang-gong.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> (1970, DECEMBER 18). INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY REVIEWED. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WEB.URI.EDU/IAICS/FILES/10-WENXIANG-GONG.PDF](https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/10-wenxiang-gong.pdf)

state in relation to other countries.”<sup>23</sup> Sovereignty refers to a state’s internal power as well as its independence from external control. If viewed internally, information sovereignty is control of the policies that regulate and disseminate information. Externally, information sovereignty is the independence of states’ production and use of information.<sup>24</sup> The concept of information sovereignty becomes even more complex in an increasingly globalized world. The satellite broadcasting UNESCO declaration, mentioned above, touches on information sovereignty in phrases such as “Satellite broadcasting shall respect the sovereignty and equality of all States.”<sup>25</sup> However, it remains unclear how states can truly exercise internal and external information sovereignty. Even if a state completely isolates itself, information sovereignty cannot be achieved. Internal information sovereignty can be achieved with isolation, but external information sovereignty requires interaction with other states.<sup>26</sup> For example, as demonstrated in the NAM summits and the subsequent formation of NWICO, the only avenue for developing countries to establish external information sovereignty and prevent developed states from dominating the media was through cooperation.

Technology has advanced considerably since 1972, when UNESCO released its declaration concerning satellite technology. With the advent of the internet and the world wide web, information flows are less restricted and more difficult to control. The boundaries of information sovereignty have become blurred. In fact, there are two categories of information sovereignty: hard and soft. Hard information sovereignty is the governmental powers that control information sharing with other nations. Soft information sovereignty is the control over political,

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<sup>23</sup> (1970, DECEMBER 18). INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY REVIEWED. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WEB.URI.EDU/IAICS/FILES/10-WENXIANG-GONG.PDF](https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/10-wenxiang-gong.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> (1970, DECEMBER 18). INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY REVIEWED. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WEB.URI.EDU/IAICS/FILES/10-WENXIANG-GONG.PDF](https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/10-wenxiang-gong.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> (1972, NOVEMBER 15). DECLARATION OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON THE USE OF SATELLITE ... - UNESCO. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTP://PORTAL.UNESCO.ORG/EN/EV.PHP-URL\\_ID=17518&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.HTML](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-url_id=17518&url_do=do_topic&url_section=201.html)

<sup>26</sup> (1970, DECEMBER 18). INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY REVIEWED. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WEB.URI.EDU/IAICS/FILES/10-WENXIANG-GONG.PDF](https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/10-wenxiang-gong.pdf)

educational, social, and cultural information that flows between states.<sup>27</sup> It is easy to measure and control hard information sovereignty, but soft information sovereignty is almost impossible to supervise, especially if a state exercises freedom of expression.

Developing states have traditionally been staunch supporters of information sovereignty, especially soft information sovereignty, because it is viewed as a state security issue. For example, it is widely believed by scholars that the ruling communist party in Romania, that fell in 1989, began to crumble due to the importation of western TV programs that replaced domestic programs.<sup>28</sup> Information sovereignty is related to concerns with both “cultural security” and “information technology security.” Cultural security lies within the realm of soft information sovereignty, while information technology security is related to hard information sovereignty. The Romania example above demonstrates concerns with cultural security; it is the spreading of information related to ideologies, cultural traditions, lifestyles, and political systems, which vary from state to state.<sup>29</sup> Some states view cultural security and soft information controls as restrictions of freedom of expression, speech, and press, while others view it as prevention of “cultural domination.” Information technology security refers to a state’s access to and use of information technology, such as access to the world wide web, television sets, computers, and telecommunications.<sup>30</sup> Again, UNESCO’s efforts are currently concentrated in hard information sovereignty, as it is less controversial.

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<sup>27</sup> (1970, DECEMBER 18). INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY REVIEWED. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WEB.URI.EDU/IAICS/FILES/10-WENXIANG-GONG.PDF](https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/10-wenxiang-gong.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> (1970, DECEMBER 18). INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY REVIEWED. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WEB.URI.EDU/IAICS/FILES/10-WENXIANG-GONG.PDF](https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/10-wenxiang-gong.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> (1970, DECEMBER 18). INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY REVIEWED. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WEB.URI.EDU/IAICS/FILES/10-WENXIANG-GONG.PDF](https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/10-wenxiang-gong.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> (1970, DECEMBER 18). INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY REVIEWED. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WEB.URI.EDU/IAICS/FILES/10-WENXIANG-GONG.PDF](https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/10-wenxiang-gong.pdf)



## NII AND GII

In 1995, the G-7 Conference on Information Society formulated and approved the National Information Infrastructure (NII) and Global Information Infrastructure (GII) proposals.<sup>31</sup> NII is a plan to connect all corners of a given state through all forms of information technology, including telecommunications, satellite, and internet. GII has the same goals, but on a global scale. However, the NII and GII have been criticized for only representing the interests of developed states, especially the G-7 countries. Supporters of the proposals claim that the plans encourage international cooperation, thereby assisting developing states regardless of the focus on developed states' interests.

Fast paced technological advancements and confusion over the limits of freedom of information and information sovereignty have pitted developing states against developed states on many key issues. In this state of global confusion, disinformation campaigns, also known as “fake news,” have been allowed to propagate within and between state borders. NWICO ideals seem to have fallen by the wayside while the UN focuses on technology infrastructure. The door is open to interpretation of information sovereignty and questions have been raised on whether the enforcement of information sovereignty should include both hard and soft definitions. Until a clear definition of freedom of information and information sovereignty has been established on the international stage, issues with cultural security, state sovereignty, disinformation campaigns, and the realization of UN Charter ideals will likely continue.

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<sup>31</sup> (1970, DECEMBER 18). INFORMATION SOVEREIGNTY REVIEWED. RETRIEVED AUGUST 5, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WEB.URI.EDU/IAICS/FILES/10-WENXIANG-GONG.PDF](https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/10-wenxiang-gong.pdf)

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is your state's stance on NWICO ideals?
2. Has your state openly supported or produced propaganda? Has your state disseminated propaganda to other states?
3. What measures has your state taken to ensure freedom of information for its population?
4. Does your state support programs to assist developing states in the procurement of technology and the advancement of freedom of information in those states?
5. Should steps be taken to address soft information sovereignty and cultural security? What should these measures be?
6. What is your state's definition of information sovereignty? Does it include both hard and soft definitions?

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# ELABORATING ON SEXUAL RIGHTS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ISSUES BOOK  
ALLISON KREBS – HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY

Sexuality applies to all humans that inhabit this planet; however, the global community continues to ignore the contentious issues that are affecting citizens of every sovereign state. It is the duty of the United Nations (UN) to look back to the beginning of the UN Charter “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small” in order to rectify the grievances of ignored sexual rights that continue to pervade contemporary society.<sup>1</sup>

## LGBTQ+ PERSECUTION

Although significant strides have been made in the past few decades in favor of the LGBTQ+ community, many LGBTQ+ people and their allies face persecution on a daily basis throughout the world. Homophobic attacks continue to be seen regularly, whether it be through brutal violence or hate speech. Not only do these attacks occur, but they are also often overlooked by the media and governments. For example, Armenia, and many other member states, still do not consider “sexual orientation and gender identity as a ground for protection from discrimination.”<sup>2</sup> Because of this, LGBTQ+ fueled violence does not receive proper justice within global governmental systems.

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<sup>1</sup> "UN CHARTER (FULL TEXT)." UNITED NATIONS. ACCESSED AUGUST 10, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/EN/SECTIONS/UN-CHARTER/UN-CHARTER-FULL-TEXT/](http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/).

<sup>2</sup> "VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBT ACTIVISTS IN ARMENIA." HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH. AUGUST 10, 2018. ACCESSED AUGUST 13, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.HRW.ORG/NEWS/2018/08/10/VIOLENCE-AGAINST-LGBT-ACTIVISTS-ARMENIA](https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/08/10/violence-against-lgbt-activists-armenia).

In the United States, members of the LGBTQ+ community are more likely to be targets of hate crimes than any other minority group.<sup>3</sup> The United States is not alone in this statistic, however. LGBTQ+ peoples are the targets of hate crimes across a plethora of member states. Although the general theme of LGBTQ+ acceptance is on the rise, especially with maturing generations, this rise of generalized acceptance has also led to a rise in intolerant behaviors. As of 2016, homosexuality was an offense punishable by death in ten nations.<sup>4</sup> LGBTQ+ relationships are illegal in seventy-four nations, forty of which have laws that allow for being gay as a defense in a criminal hearing.<sup>5</sup> Although many nations are progressing in terms of LGBTQ+ rights, regressive states are inflicting significant harm, both emotionally and physically, to global LGBTQ+ populations.

The United Nations has attempted to protect the human rights of the LGBTQ+ community with both legislation and advocacy. In July 2013, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights launched the U.N.'s Free & Equal campaign to promote understanding of the human rights of LGBTQ+ people.<sup>6</sup> That campaign spotlights discrimination of the LGBTQ+ community, including access to health care, treatment in schools, blackmail, arrest, and imprisonment.<sup>7</sup> Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General from 2010 to 2017, consistently spoke out as an advocate for equality during his term. He urged the international community to work for equal treatment of LGBTQ+ people, as all people should have their most basic human rights

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<sup>3</sup> MYKHYALYSHYN, HAEYOUN PARK AND IARYNA. "L.G.B.T. PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE TARGETS OF HATE CRIMES THAN ANY OTHER MINORITY GROUP." THE NEW YORK TIMES. JUNE 16, 2016. ACCESSED AUGUST 10, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.NYTIMES.COM/INTERACTIVE/2016/06/16/US/HATE-CRIMES-AGAINST-LGBT.HTML](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/06/16/us/hate-crimes-against-lgbt.html).

<sup>4</sup> SAINATO, MICHAEL. "GLOBAL LGBT COMMUNITY FACES WAVE OF HATE CRIMES." OBSERVER. MAY 16, 2017. ACCESSED AUGUST 10, 2018. [HTTPS://OBSERVER.COM/2017/05/LGBT-GLOBAL-COMMUNITY-HATE-CRIMES/](https://observer.com/2017/05/lgbt-global-community-hate-crimes/).

<sup>5</sup> SAINATO, MICHAEL, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> "UN FREE & EQUAL." UN FREE & EQUAL. ACCESSED AUGUST 9, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.UNFE.ORG/](https://www.unfe.org/).

<sup>7</sup> "UN FREE & EQUAL," 2018.

protected. His approach was direct, saying, for example, “I will always fight for the equality of the LGBT members of our human family.”<sup>8</sup>

## FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Another violation of sexual rights involves female genital mutilation (FGM). FGM is the collective term for various procedures that involve partial or total removal of female external genitalia, or injury to any of the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.<sup>9</sup> FGM has no health benefits for girls or women and can often cause severe bleeding, infection, and complications during childbirth.<sup>10</sup> FGM is concentrated in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, and currently affects more than 200 million girls and women.<sup>11</sup> FGM is a serious violation of the human rights of girls and women. In most of the societies where FGM is commonplace, the practice is considered a cultural tradition.<sup>12</sup> This argument is frequently invoked to continue the detrimental practice. FGM is a social norm in many areas, and, in some societies, all the women have undergone it.<sup>13</sup> Because of this, FGM’s degrading connotation is lost.

The 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for an end to FGM under Goal 5: Gender Equality.<sup>14</sup> Targets 5.3 and 5.3.2 aim to “eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation” due to the “proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age.”<sup>15</sup> In addition to the recognition of FGM in the SDGs, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has

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<sup>8</sup> “BAN CALLS FOR EFFORTS TO SECURE EQUAL RIGHTS FOR LGBT COMMUNITY.” UNITED NATIONS. ACCESSED AUGUST 9, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.UN.ORG/SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPMENT/BLOG/2016/09/BAN-CALLS-FOR-EFFORTS-TO-SECURE-EQUAL-RIGHTS-FOR-LGBT-COMMUNITY/](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/09/ban-calls-for-efforts-to-secure-equal-rights-for-lgbt-community/).

<sup>9</sup> “FGM NATIONAL CLINICAL GROUP.” FGM NATIONAL CLINICAL GROUP. ACCESSED AUGUST 10, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.FGMNATIONALGROUP.ORG/](http://www.fgmnationalgroup.org/).

<sup>10</sup> “FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION.” WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. ACCESSED AUGUST 8, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.WHO.INT/NEWS-ROOM/FACT-SHEETS/DETAIL/FEMALE-GENITAL-MUTILATION](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation).

<sup>11</sup> “FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION,” 2018.

<sup>12</sup> “FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION,” 2018.

<sup>13</sup> “FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION,” 2018.

<sup>14</sup> “SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS .: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM.” UNITED NATIONS. ACCESSED AUGUST 10, 2018. [HTTPS://SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPMENT.UN.ORG/?MENU=1300](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300).

<sup>15</sup> “SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS,” 2018.



spoken out on the issue, asserting that “With the dignity, health, and well-being of millions of girls at stake, there is no time to waste. Together, we can and must end this harmful practice.”<sup>16</sup> Although the UN recognizes February 6th as the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, the practice continues, afflicting some of the world’s most vulnerable people.<sup>17</sup>

## FORCED CHILD MARRIAGES

Throughout many of the world’s current war zones, the increased need for security is causing more and more young girls to be forced into child marriages in order to provide for their families.<sup>18</sup> Countries, such as Yemen, marred by civil war have become increasingly devastated areas to inhabit. Because of this, increased numbers of desperate families are selling their daughters to grown men as child brides.<sup>19</sup> Families are able to use their daughter’s dowry to supply themselves with food and other human necessities for extended periods of time.<sup>20</sup> Meritxell Relano, the United Nations Children’s Fund representative in Yemen, commented on the alarming issue, “It is impossible to say how many kids are being pulled out of school now to be married off...but we know that more and more parents are doing this. The lack of livelihood and unemployment is forcing them to do this.”<sup>21</sup> The United Nations Population Fund notes child marriage as “the toxic product of poverty and gender inequality.”<sup>22</sup> Being forced into marriage as a child significantly thwarts a young girl’s development.<sup>23</sup> A girl married away as a child bride faces social isolation due to her relationship with her husband, which often

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<sup>16</sup> "FGM, GENITAL MUTILATION, EXCISION, HEALTH, HUMAN RIGHTS, WOMEN, GIRLS, UNFPA." UNITED NATIONS. ACCESSED AUGUST 11, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/EN/EVENTS/FEMALEGENITALMUTILATIONDAY/](http://www.un.org/en/events/femalegenitalmutilationday/).

<sup>17</sup> "FGM, GENITAL MUTILATION," 2018.

<sup>18</sup> YOUSSEF, NOUR. "2 PATHS FOR YEMEN'S WAR-SCARRED CHILDREN: COMBAT, OR MARRIAGE." THE NEW YORK TIMES. OCTOBER 09, 2017. ACCESSED AUGUST 7, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.NYTIMES.COM/2017/10/09/WORLD/MIDDLEEAST/YEMEN-WAR-CHILDREN.HTML](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/09/world/middleeast/yemen-war-children.html).

<sup>19</sup> GIRLS NOT BRIDES. "YEMEN - CHILD MARRIAGE AROUND THE WORLD. GIRLS NOT BRIDES." GIRLS NOT BRIDES. ACCESSED AUGUST 7, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.GIRLSNOTBRIDES.ORG/CHILD-MARRIAGE/YEMEN/](https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/yemen/).

<sup>20</sup> GIRLS NOT BRIDES, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> YOUSSEF, NOUR, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> "CHILD MARRIAGE." UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND. ACCESSED AUGUST 7, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.UNFPA.ORG/CHILD-MARRIAGE](https://www.unfpa.org/child-marriage).

<sup>23</sup> "CHILD MARRIAGE," 2018.

results in domestic violence, as well as pregnancy at a young age.<sup>24</sup> These factors often result in girls being unable to attend school or have any career opportunities.<sup>25</sup>

The 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for an end to child marriages under Goal 5: Gender Equality.<sup>26</sup> Targets 5.3 and 5.3.1 seek to “eliminate the harmful practices of child, early, and forced marriages” owing to the “proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18.”<sup>27</sup> In addition to the mention of forced child marriages in the SDGs, the UN has also spoken out on the detrimental effects of cohabitation.<sup>28</sup> Cohabitation is the same concept of marriage — a couple lives in a union; however, there is a lack of societal and legal recognition.<sup>29</sup> Girls coaxed or coerced into these informal unions are often just as vulnerable, if not more vulnerable, than girls in forced child marriages. This is due to the undefined nature of the relationship, coupled with the same detrimental effects of a “legitimate” marriage, such as early pregnancy and denial of possible career goals.

## SEX TRAFFICKING

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Human trafficking is the acquisition of people by improper means such as force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them.”<sup>30</sup> Sex trafficking incorporates this exploitation of human beings through the sex industry, whether it be through prostitution rings, pornography, sexual slavery, or even

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<sup>24</sup> “CHILD MARRIAGE,” 2018.

<sup>25</sup> “CHILD MARRIAGE,” 2018.

<sup>26</sup> “SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS,” 2018.

<sup>27</sup> “SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS,” 2018.

<sup>28</sup> “CHILD MARRIAGE.” UNICEF DATA. ACCESSED AUGUST 9, 2018. [HTTPS://DATA.UNICEF.ORG/TOPIC/CHILD-PROTECTION/CHILD-MARRIAGE/](https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/).

<sup>29</sup> “CHILD MARRIAGE.” UNICEF DATA, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> ALFONSO, GEORGINA. “UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME.” UNODC - HUMAN TRAFFICKING. ACCESSED AUGUST 11, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.UNODC.ORG/UNODC/EN/HUMAN-TRAFFICKING/INDEX.HTML](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index.html).

forced surrogacy.<sup>31</sup> This practice is condemned by 158 nations, yet the rate of convictions continues to remain extremely low and victims rarely receive the services that their respective governments should supply.<sup>32</sup> Seventy-one percent of all human trafficking victims are currently women and girls; one third also happen to be children.<sup>33</sup>

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,<sup>34</sup> created via Resolution 55/25, addresses an important subject matter. Three additional documents ensued: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air; and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components, and Ammunition.<sup>35</sup> The first protocol helped member states collectively define the issue of human trafficking by establishing an agreed upon definition of the crime.<sup>36</sup>

## THE PERPETUATION OF RAPE CULTURE

Although not all violence against women is tangible, the perpetuation of rape culture continues to foster an underlying aggression towards women worldwide. Rape culture is defined as an environment in which rape and sexual violence against women are normalized and are often dismissed in the news and popular culture.<sup>37</sup> Rape culture exists in the use of misogynistic language, objectification of women, and the downplay of sexual violence, which contributes to a societal standard that is unsafe for women everywhere.<sup>38</sup> Rape culture subconsciously forces all

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<sup>31</sup> "SEX TRAFFICKING | HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR SEX." END SLAVERY NOW. ACCESSED AUGUST 11, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.ENDSLAVERYNOW.ORG/LEARN/SLAVERY-TODAY/SEX-TRAFFICKING](http://www.endslaverynow.org/learn/slavery-today/sex-trafficking).

<sup>32</sup> ALFONSO, GEORGINA, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> ALFONSO, GEORGINA, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> DEVIVO, ANTONIO "UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME." UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME. ACCESSED AUGUST 11, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.UNODC.ORG/UNODC/EN/ORGANIZED-CRIME/INTRO/UNOC.HTML](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/unoc.html).

<sup>35</sup> DEVIVO, ANTONIO, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> DEVIVO, ANTONIO, 2018.

<sup>37</sup> "RAPE CULTURE." MARSHALL UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S CENTER. ACCESSED OCTOBER 16, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.MARSHALL.EDU/WCENTER/SEXUAL-ASSAULT/RAPE-CULTURE/](https://www.marshall.edu/wcenter/sexual-assault/rape-culture/).

<sup>38</sup> "RAPE CULTURE," 2018.

women into a subordinate role, one in which women and girls live with the fear of rape and sexual assault on a daily basis.<sup>39</sup>

Victim blaming is a practice that has developed as a direct cause of rape culture; victim blaming places the fault of the occurrence of sexual and domestic violence on the survivors of the attacks, rather than on the attackers.<sup>40</sup> This practice has resulted in a vicious cycle of extreme guilt for victims over acts which they had no control of.<sup>41</sup> The attitude of victim blaming merely supports the cases of attackers and belittles victims of brutal crimes. Victim blaming can be seen in the derogatory discussion of women, false linkage of rape to promiscuity, and the overall refusal to take rape allegations seriously. Rape culture has developed into something that constantly affects all women and victims of sexual violence.

The 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for increased support of women under Goal 5: Gender Equality.<sup>42</sup> The UN recognizes the need for additional support of women in Goal 5 by committing to “adopt[ing] and strengthen[ing] sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.”<sup>43</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The global community has continuously downplayed or ignored drastic violations of sexual rights in the 21st century, such as but not limited to, LGBTQ+ persecution, female genital mutilation, forced child marriages, sex trafficking, and the perpetuation of rape culture. It is the UN’s duty to tackle these issues head-on, with the guidance of the UN Charter, “to reaffirm faith

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<sup>39</sup> "RAPE CULTURE," 2018.

<sup>40</sup> "HOW TO AVOID VICTIM BLAMING." HARVARD LAW SCHOOL HALT. ACCESSED OCTOBER 16, 2018. [HTTPS://ORGS.LAW.HARVARD.EDU/HALT/HOW-TO-AVOID-VICTIM-BLAMING/](https://orgs.law.harvard.edu/halt/how-to-avoid-victim-blaming/).

<sup>41</sup> "HOW TO AVOID VICTIM BLAMING," 2018.

<sup>42</sup> "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS," 2018.

<sup>43</sup> "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS," 2018.

in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.” In an optimal scenario, the UN can provide justice to those discriminated against and put in harm’s way due to their sexuality, gender, or bodily autonomy.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> "UN CHARTER (FULL TEXT)," 2018.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do some groups require special human rights? If so, does this mean that some groups should have more rights than others?
2. Has the United Nations made any true progress in reducing sexual rights violations?
3. How has the United Nations been successful in tackling issues of sexual rights? Are any particular strategies (i.e., advocacy or legislation) benefiting certain causes more than others?
4. Are certain violations more prominent in particular regions?
5. How can the United Nations initiate action pertaining to varying member states across multiple regions?

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# THIRD COMMITTEE

## 69TH SESSION ISSUES BOOK

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FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

HASHTAG ACTIVISM: THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

STRENGTHENING THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS:  
ELABORATING THE CONVENTION ON AGING



MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST  
69TH SESSION



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

69TH ANNUAL SESSION

OUR COMMON HUMANITY: BACK TO THE PRINCIPLES OF  
THE UN CHARTER

THE MAIN COMMITTEES OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONSIDER AGENDA ITEMS REFERRED TO THEM BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND PREPARE RECOMMENDATIONS AND DRAFT RESOLUTIONS FOR SUBMISSION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PLENARY. THE COMMITTEES CORRESPOND WITH THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S MAJOR FIELDS OF RESPONSIBILITY.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S THIRD COMMITTEE FOCUSES ON TOPICS OF A SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN, AND CULTURAL NATURE.  
(UN HANDBOOK, 2017-18)

THE THIRD COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY FOR THE 69TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

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PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THE CONTENT OF THIS ISSUES BOOK AND, NECESSARILY, DELIBERATIONS AT THE ANNUAL SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST IN THIS COMMITTEE WILL ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND VIOLENCE. ALL DELEGATES ARE EXPECTED TO APPROACH THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS, AND ALL OTHERS ON THIS YEAR'S AGENDA, WITH RESPECT AND PROFESSIONALISM.

# **FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF**

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
THIRD COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK  
BRANDON NG – ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Whether it was Pope Urban II calling on all Christians to wage war against Muslims, or King Louis XIV persecuting the French Huguenots, religion, and the intolerance of it, has always had a hand in shaping human history. Despite this, protections for religious freedom on an international scale has been minimal, or non-existent for most of this time. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the international community, haunted by the cruelty it experienced, came together to ratify the United Nations Charter. The United Nations charter was one of the first international documents that really addressed the importance of protecting human rights for everyone, no matter their race, sex, language, or religion. This was considered one of the greatest victories for human rights, but as time passed, it became evident that there had to be a resolution that specifically addresses religious rights.

Passed in 1981, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief was one of the first resolutions that really addressed religion on a large scale. It recognizes religion as “One of the fundamental elements in [a person’s] conception of life”<sup>1</sup> and lays down some basic principles that are vital for securing religious freedom, such as the freedom:

- To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes;

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<sup>1</sup> "A/RES/36/55. DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF ...." 25 NOV. 1981, [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/DOCUMENTS/GA/RES/36/A36R055.HTM](http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/36/a36r055.htm). ACCESSED 1 NOV. 2018.

- To establish and maintain appropriate charitable or humanitarian institutions;
- To make, acquire and is to an adequate extent the necessary articles and martials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief;

to realize the goals of the Declaration, the United Nations also passed a series of resolutions, the most important one being the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance, as it led to the creation of the role of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

#### **SPECIAL RAPPOREUR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF**

Initially recognized as the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief is the premier figure on religious issues in the United Nations. Appointed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur is mandated:

- To promote the adoption of measures at the national, regional and international levels to ensure the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief;
- - to identify existing and emerging obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief and present recommendations on ways and means to overcome such obstacles;
- To continue her/his/their efforts to examine incidents and governmental actions that are incompatible with the provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and to recommend remedial measures as appropriate;
- To continue to apply a gender perspective, inter alia, through the identification of gender-specific abuses, in the reporting process, including in information collection and in recommendations.

The Special Rapporteur fulfills the mandate mainly through annual reports to the Human Rights Council. These annual reports have been known to cover a wide variety of topics, from freedom of religion or belief of persons belonging to religious minorities, to the situation of detainees at Guantánamo Bay. In addition to these annual reports, the Special Rapporteur also conducts in-depth country visits. During these visits, the Special Rapporteur will meet with relevant representatives to fully understand the circumstances surrounding a country and provide constructive feedback.

## DEFAMATION OF RELIGION

Like most issues, freedom of religion can look very different based on countries and their development status, especially when it comes to defamation of religion. While Islamophobia has existed since almost the start of the religion itself, there was a very drastic change in tone among much of the developed world after the tragic attack on September 11, 2001. Governments started to report a troubling rise in hate crimes against Muslim populations, a trend that has only gotten worse in recent years. In a period from around 2001 to 2010, the Islamic bloc, along with many developing nations, proposed several non-binding resolutions that strongly condemned “discriminatory measures [that] will fuel discrimination, extremism, and misperception leading to polarization and fragmentation with dangerous unintended and unforeseen consequences.”<sup>2</sup>.

These resolutions were celebrated by the Islamic bloc and many developing states as a way of combating the global increase in discrimination, but Western democracies, along aside human right advocacy groups, argued that these defamation of religion resolutions were used by certain countries to justify anti-blasphemy laws. Furthermore, they argued that countries were

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<sup>2</sup> “GENERAL ASSEMBLY - OHCHR.” 11 MAR. 2010, [HTTP://AP.OHCHR.ORG/DOCUMENTS/E/HRC/D\\_RES\\_DEC/A\\_HRC\\_13\\_L1.PDF](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/D_RES_DEC/A_HRC_13_L1.PDF).  
ACCESSED 1 NOV. 2018.



using their anti-blasphemy laws to target journalists and political rivals, seriously infringing on people's right to free speech.

## UZBEKISTAN

Like other nations that were a part of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan experienced the policy of state atheism from 1924 until 1991, when they declared independence. After declaring independence, the resurgence of religion slowly took hold in the country. New mosques were starting to be built, religious schools started to re-open, and many started to adopt Islamic practices. Fearing that this new wave of religion could create a political opposition, authorities started to conduct a campaign against “unofficial” Islam. Authorities would start to censor religious materials and harass or even detain men with beards, which was seen as a symbol of religious devotion.

While freedom of religion is guaranteed by their constitution, Uzbekistan has a series of legislation that limit this right, including the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, the Criminal Code, and the code of Administrative Offences. These laws come together to tightly constrain the freedom of believers. Some of these constraints include:

- barring of political parties formed based on religious grounds;
- criminalizing of any unregistered religious activity;
- censorship of the content, production, and distribution of religious publications;
- prohibiting most missionary activities
- requiring registration of all religious organizations

The list of ways citizens of Uzbekistan are constrained religiously can go on for countless pages, and part of the reason is because the laws mentioned above are extremely broad and open to interpretation, all in the name of national security.

The Special Rapporteur notes that while the constitution guarantees freedom of religion for citizens of Uzbekistan, the excessive regulation practiced by the government is more along the lines of religious toleration, and that the basic rights to religious freedom are not actually guaranteed. But these rights can not be realized if Uzbekistan does not recognize the other rights that are intrinsically tied to religious freedom as well, rights such as the freedom of expression, or the freedom of peaceful assembly.

## DENMARK

In a stark contrast to Uzbekistan, religious freedom in Denmark is highly valued and respected by all members of the community. People are free to express and practice their religion without fearing persecution. However, Denmark does face a very different set of challenges, many of which could be attributed to an increase in religious diversity.

Until fairly recently, Denmark was one of the most religiously homogeneous societies in Europe. Known as “The People’s Church”, the Lutheran Evangelical Church in Denmark enjoys a very high attendance rate and is considered a big part of the Danish identity, to there point where it is even entrenched in the constitution. But as immigration becomes more of a common theme around the world, the question of cultural identity always comes into play. For Denmark, waves of immigration has brought Islam into the spotlight. For a country that has always been Evangelical, seeing headscarves, hijabs, and new mosques, have caused feelings of anxiety and unease, especially after the killings at the Krudttonden Cultural Centre, and in front of the Great Synagogue in Copenhagen in 2015.

While all the Muslims that the Special Rapporteur met with noted that they all could generally practice their religion freely and more that people have gotten accustomed to seeing headscarves, there has been growing unrest between Muslims and Danes. Many feel that Islamic

and Danish culture do not fit well together, if at all. And while integration is necessary for a healthy society, many feel that the cries for more integration are racially charged. Even young Muslims, who grew up in Denmark and spoke Danish as their first language, face these demands for more integration. These constant demands have led to feelings of alienation and frustration among much of the younger generations.

To combat this new wave of social anxiety and foster strong relationships between different social groups, Denmark has started a radical new model where all parts of a municipality work together in a cross-sectoral approach to build sustainable trust. What this means is that professional support, such as counselling and mentoring are always available, even for those who come in conflict with the law. Diversity also plays a huge role in the program as well. Local Lutheran churches have started to host interreligious dialogues between different denominations, and the city of Vollsrose even made national headline for hiring a Muslim woman who wears the hijab for the police force. This was a radical move for a country that did not always accept its Muslim population or obvious symbols of Islam, like the hijab. This program was so successful that there was a considerable decrease in the number of young people traveling to Syria to fight for the Islamic State, showing that a more explicit and proactive approach that addresses the individual can really make a difference.

As with most countries, Denmark also has provisions in its constitution to protect the freedom of religion. Article 67 of its' constitution states that "citizens shall be at liberty to form congregations for the worship of God in a manner which is in accordance with their convictions, provided that nothing contrary to good morals or public order shall be taught or done."<sup>3</sup> Compared to the rest of the European Union, who enjoy a broad definition of religious freedom where everyone is free to practice their theistic or non-theistic beliefs, this definition of religious

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<sup>3</sup> "STATSMINISTERIET - THE CONSTITUTIONAL ACT OF DENMARK." [HTTP://WWW.STM.DK/\\_P\\_10992.HTML](http://www.stm.dk/_P_10992.html). ACCESSED 1 NOV. 2018.

freedom is limited to “the worship of God” and gives the state a very broad interpretation for imposing limitations. While the government of Denmark has always complied with the international standard for religious freedom, it is important to note that older, narrower laws like these can be used to justify the persecution of religious minorities that do not partake in the worship of God.

## CONCERNING TRENDS

The Special Rapporteur identifies some global trends that are especially concerning in his “Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief”. Firstly, some member states still have legislation that unduly restrict the rights of religious minorities. This statutes criminalize activities such as blasphemy, apostasy, and atheism, and only lead to more division among religious groups. Another point of concern for the Special Rapporteur is the failure of States to provide asylum for those who fear persecution based on religious beliefs, he states that forcibly turning away refugees “goes against both the spirit and the letter of the right to freedom of religion or belief.<sup>4</sup>”. Furthermore, there is also the concern about the rise of religious violence from non-state actors like terrorist groups, such as Islamic State and Boko Haram, who have been responsible for some of the most egregious human rights violations.

## CONCLUSIONS

As immigration becomes more prevalent, the need for a strong legislative foundation will be more important than ever for protecting religious freedom. Immigration will bring more religious diversity to all areas, especially for countries who have historically been religiously homogeneous. This is why creating the legislative foundation for religious freedom is important

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<sup>4</sup> "DOCUMENTS - REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION ...." 17 JAN. 2017, [HTTP://WWW.HUMANRIGHTSVOICES.ORG/SITE/DOCUMENTS/?D=17204&ID=20473](http://www.humanrightsvoices.org/site/documents/?D=17204&ID=20473). ACCESSED 1 NOV. 2018.

now, before a precedent of legal religious persecution takes even more of a hold. It is also vital that governments all over the world stand against the new wave of religious intolerance. Not only should world leaders denounce the violent acts committed by both state and non-state actors in the name of religion, but also promote more unity and dialogue among the different religious groups.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Does your country have a history of religious conflicts? What actions has your government taken to resolve these conflicts?
2. Does your country have a strong legislative base for protecting religious minorities?
3. Has your country experienced an increase in religious diversity? If so, how has that diversity changed behavior in your country?
4. Has your country experienced an increase in religious hate crime? If so, how has your country dealt with this issue?
5. What can the international community do further protect religious rights on all levels.

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# HASHTAG ACTIVISM: EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
THIRD COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK  
AASHNEY SHAH – ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Social media platforms having become increasingly pervasive in everyday life and as a result, are having a larger impact on the conversations surrounding issues around the world. Many social movements have used social media as a tool to crowdsource with diverse stakeholders as well as spread their message to diverse communities and nations <sup>1</sup>. One area that social media activism has seen a boom in has been feminism and the empowerment of women and girls. UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 is “achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will require more vigorous efforts, including legal frameworks, to counter deeply rooted gender-based discrimination that often results from patriarchal attitudes and related social norms” by 2030 <sup>2</sup>. In order to achieve this goal, there must be immediate action taken to eliminate the root causes of gender disparity. Based on data from 87 countries, 1 in 5 women and girls under the age of 50 will have experienced physical and/or sexual assault by an intimate partner within the last 12 months and women do 2.6 times more unpaid care and domestic work than men which leads to lower earnings and less time to engage in non-work activities <sup>3</sup>. These disparities make reaching SDG 5 vital. With the rising prevalence of hashtags like #MeToo and #TimesUp, there has been an enormous amount importance and

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<sup>1</sup> DHIRAJ MURTHY, “INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA, ACTIVISM, AND ORGANIZATIONS.” *SOCIAL MEDIA SOCIETY*, VOL. 4, NO. 1, 1 FEB 2018.

<sup>2</sup> “SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS” SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM. [HTTPS://SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPMENT.UN.ORG/SDG5](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5)

<sup>3</sup> “SDG 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.” UNITED NATIONS. ACCESSED: AUGUST 1, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.UNWOMEN.ORG/EN/NEWS/IN-FOCUS/WOMEN-AND-THE-SDGS/SDG-5-GENDER-EQUALITY](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality)



attention placed on the issues of discrimination and violence in the workforce globally within the past year.

## #METOO

On October 15, 2017, in response to sexual misconduct allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, actress Alyssa Milano posted a tweet urging victims of sexual assault or harassment to respond to her tweet with the words ‘me too’ in order to “give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.”<sup>4</sup> This marked the beginning of the contemporary #MeToo movement, with over 30,000 people having responded to Milano’s tweet the following day. By early November 2017, #MeToo had been tweeted 2.3 million times from 85 countries and more than 24 million people had participated in the movement by posting, reacting and commenting over 77 million times.<sup>5</sup> Women from various backgrounds who have participated in the #MeToo movement were named TIME magazine’s 2017 Person of the Year, accelerating the attention placed on the movement.

The movement has spread rapidly, having widespread impacts within the United States and around the world. In France, the hashtag #BalanceTonPorc, which translates to “snitch out your pic” was started by journalist Sandra Muller; Italians have taken to Twitter with the hashtag #QuellaVoltaChe, which translates to “that time when”; Spain trended #YoTambien which is #MeToo in Spanish, and direct translations of #MeToo in Arabic have spread throughout the Middle East and Africa regions. Data from early November 2017 showed that users in the United States, United Kingdom, India, France and Canada used #MeToo most heavily.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> @ALYSSA\_MILANO, “IF YOU’VE BEEN SEXUALLY HARASSED OR ASSAULTED WRITE ‘ME TOO’ AS A REPLY TO THIS TWEET.” TWITTER, 15 OCT. 2017, 1:21 P.M., [HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/ALYSSA\\_MILANO/STATUS/919659438700670976](https://twitter.com/ALYSSA_MILANO/status/919659438700670976)

<sup>5</sup> KARA FOX, “#METOO’S GLOBAL MOVEMENT: THE ANATOMY OF A VIRAL CAMPAIGN.” CNN, LAST MODIFIED: 9 NOV. 2017. [HTTPS://WWW.CNN.COM/2017/11/09/WORLD/METOO-HASHTAG-GLOBAL-MOVEMENT/INDEX.HTML](https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/09/world/metoo-hashtag-global-movement/index.html)

<sup>6</sup> CATHERINE POWELL, “#METOO GOES GLOBAL AND CROSSES MULTIPLE BOUNDARIES ” COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, PUBLISHED: 14 DEC. 2017. [HTTPS://WWW.CFR.ORG/BLOG/METOO-GOES-GLOBAL-AND-CROSSES-MULTIPLE-BOUNDARIES](https://www.cfr.org/blog/metoo-goes-global-and-crosses-multiple-boundaries)

## #TIMESUP

This movement was started on January 1, 2017 when 300 leading women in Hollywood published an open letter in the New York Times and La Opinión regarding gender parity in the workplace<sup>7</sup>. The Time's Up movement is a women's empowerment movement similar to #MeToo, but with more specific goals. The aim of the Time's Up organization is to create concrete change through the passage of legislation and large policy changes that will lead to safety and equity in the workplace, such as equal pay and equal work environments as well as increased opportunities for women in low wage industries and women of color<sup>8</sup>. They have also created the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund to provide legal and financial support for those who want to fight sexual misconduct through the legal system.

The movement, however, is not entirely centralized and consists of loosely aligned working groups, from farm workers to actresses, working on achieving different part of the broader issue. The movement initially made headlines during the Golden Globe Awards, when they called on attendees to wear all black in support of the movement's mission<sup>9</sup>. The movement expanded out of the United States when it spread to the United Kingdom with a call to wear all black to the BAFTAs.<sup>10</sup>

## GLOBAL RESPONSE

In response to the #MeToo and #TimesUp allegations regarding legal protections against sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, the International Labor Conference held its

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<sup>7</sup> ALIX LANGONE, "#METOO AND TIME'S UP FOUNDERS EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE 2 MOVEMENTS — AND HOW THEY'RE ALIKE," TIME MAGAZINE, LAST MODIFIED: 22 MARCH 2016. [HTTP://TIME.COM/5189945/WHATS-THE-DIFFERENCE-BETWEEN-THE-METOO-AND-TIMES-UP-MOVEMENTS/](http://time.com/5189945/whats-the-difference-between-the-metoo-and-times-up-movements/)

<sup>8</sup> ALIX LANGONE, 2018

<sup>9</sup> ALIX LANGONE, 2018

<sup>10</sup> "SISTERS, THIS IS OUR MOMENT TO SAY TIME'S UP," HUFFINGTON POST, PUBLISHED: 17 FEB 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.THEGUARDIAN.COM/WORLD/2018/FEB/18/SISTERS-THIS-IS-OUR-MOMENT-TO-SAY-TIMES-UP](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/18/sisters-this-is-our-moment-to-say-times-up)

first discussion on the International Labor Organization's standard setting process on violence and harassment in early July 2018 in order to eradicate all forms of violence and harassment in the workplace. As a result of the discussion, no comprehensive resolution was passed but the Committee did adopt the draft resolution to place the item entitled "Violence and Harassment in the World of Work" on the agenda of the next ordinary session for the second discussion with a view to the adoption of a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation. Much discussion was had regarding the actual Convention and it was determined that the Convention should not be one which is too prescriptive to where it becomes non ratifiable but also should not be so weak or narrow in scope to where it is ineffective. There was also some concern given the method through which the Committee decided to take action as recent technical Conventions have had low levels of ratification. However, this represents a large step in the move forward towards achieving equality in the workplace along with decreasing violence and harassment women must face in the workplace at a global level<sup>11</sup>.

Globally, there have been some developments as a result of the use of hashtag activism by women. Many prominent men in the United States, from those in politics to those in media, have lost their jobs and tarnished their reputations as a result of sexual harassment allegations by use of these hashtags. Britain has also seen the resignation of Defense Secretary Michael Fallon as a result of the use of these hashtags and also discontinued their mens-only charity gala following a Financial Times investigation stating that many of the waitresses were required to sexualize themselves and were groped by the men in attendance<sup>12</sup>. In response to allegations in Sweden, the Swedish government has proposed tightening its rape law to stipulate that explicit

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<sup>11</sup> "REPORTS OF THE STANDARD-SETTING COMMITTEE ON VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORLD OF WORK: SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS." *INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE*, 107TH SESSION, 6 JULY 2018.

<sup>12</sup> DAVID CRARY, "FOR #METOO MOVEMENT, A MIXED RECEPTION IN NATIONS OUTSIDE US," *FINANCIAL POST*, PUBLISHED: 6 MARCH 2018. [HTTPS://BUSINESS.FINANCIALPOST.COM/PMN/BUSINESS-PMN/FOR-METOO-MOVEMENT-A-MIXED-RECEPTION-IN-NATIONS-OUTSIDE-US](https://business.financialpost.com/pmn/business-pmn/for-metoo-movement-a-mixed-reception-in-nations-outside-us)

consent is required before any sexual contact. India has also seen a movement past hashtags and towards potential change with the arrest of Mahesh Murthy, the co-founder of Seedfund<sup>13</sup>.

Divisions can be seen in France where President Emmanuel Macron has strongly encouraged policies to promote gender equality but has been met by opposition of older French feminists who argue that #MeToo runs contrary to the sexual revolution's message to de-censor sexual desire<sup>14</sup>.

There has also been fallout and backlash against women who speak out as well as divisions created within groups regarding the use of hashtags like #MeToo. Japanese culture is such that people are expected to "bear one's hardship" which has deterred the reporting of sexual assault in the workplace. This culture has led to the fact that there has been no change of company policies, with 78% of Japanese companies announcing that they had not strengthened sexual harassment policies and 77% stating that they had no intention of doing so<sup>15</sup>. This trend has also been seen in Italy where Italian born actress and director Asia Argento was among the first to report Harvey Weinstein sexually assaulted her but, in Italy, she was met by heavy criticism for coming out with such accusations as well as a lack of change in government policies.<sup>16</sup>

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the use of the #MeToo hashtag has not been as prevalent but that does not mean that there has been an absence of activism through social media. In Lebanon, Lebanese feminist group KAFA advocated for the enforcement of a

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<sup>13</sup> "IS INDIA'S METOO GOING BEYOND HASHTAGS?" TIMES OF INDIA, LAST MODIFIED: 10 FEB 2018. [HTTPS://TIMESOFINDIA.INDIATIMES.COM/INDIA/IS-INDIAS-METOO-GOING-BEYOND-HASHTAGS/ARTICLESHOW/62857917.CMS](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/IS-INDIAS-METOO-GOING-BEYOND-HASHTAGS/ARTICLESHOW/62857917.cms)

<sup>14</sup> ERIKA COLLINS, "THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE #METOO MOVEMENT (PART 1)," NEW YORK LAW JOURNAL, PUBLISHED: 10 JULY 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.LAW.COM/NEWYORKLAWJOURNAL/2018/07/10/THE-GLOBAL-IMPACT-OF-THE-METOO-MOVEMENT-PART-1/](https://www.law.com/newyorklawjournal/2018/07/10/the-global-impact-of-the-metoo-movement-part-1/)

<sup>15</sup> ERIKA COLLINS, "THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE #METOO MOVEMENT (PART 2)," NEW YORK LAW JOURNAL, PUBLISHED: 12 JULY 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.LAW.COM/NEWYORKLAWJOURNAL/2018/07/12/THE-GLOBAL-IMPACT-OF-THE-METOO-MOVEMENT-PART-2/?SLRETURN=20180715191043](https://www.law.com/newyorklawjournal/2018/07/12/the-global-impact-of-the-metoo-movement-part-2/?SLRETURN=20180715191043)

<sup>16</sup> ERIKA COLLINS, 2018

domestic violence law that was passed in Beirut in 2014<sup>17</sup>. In Tunisia, human rights activists hailed the passage of a law that made it easier for sexual harassment crimes to be prosecuted and reported.<sup>18</sup> However, this activism is not indicative of the entire region, as more conservative countries have seen a lack of reporting largely due to cultural norms that treat the issue as a taboo.<sup>19</sup>

## CURRENT SHORTFALLS

The World Bank's "Women, Business, and the Law 2018" report found that only 59 out of 189 countries whose economies were studied had no specific legal provisions covering sexual harassment in employment<sup>20</sup>. These legal gaps affect women in all countries and amongst all income levels which leaves approximately 424 million working age women, 235 million of which are in the workforce, with no legal recourse in the event they experience harassment or assault in their work environment<sup>21</sup>. In addition, there is no current international legal standard that addresses violence and harassment in the workplace.

Decreasing the gender parity in the workforce could also have large global economic impacts. McKinsey and Company released a report which quantifies the impact of equality in the workforce as women make up half of the working-age population. The report concludes that if the gender parity in the workforce is non-existent, as much as \$28 trillion, or 26 percent could be added to global annual GDP by 2025<sup>22</sup>. These goals will not be fulfilled if every country in the

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<sup>17</sup> DINA BERLINER, "'#METOO' MOVEMENT STRUGGLES TO RESONATE IN ARAB COUNTRIES," THE MEDIA LINE, PUBLISHED: 17 JULY 2018. [HTTP://WWW.THEMEDIALINE.ORG/STUDENT-JOURNALISTS/METOO-MOVEMENT-STRUGGLES-RESONATE-ARAB-COUNTRIES/](http://www.themedialine.org/student-journalists/metoo-movement-struggles-resonate-arab-countries/)

<sup>18</sup> DINA BERLINER, 2018

<sup>19</sup> DINA BERLINER, 2018

<sup>20</sup> "WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2018," THE WORLD BANK, PUBLISHED: 2018

<sup>21</sup> JODY HEYMAN, "COMMENTARY: WHEN SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS LEGAL," FORTUNE MAGAZINE, PUBLISHED: 17 NOVEMBER 2017. [HTTP://FORTUNE.COM/2017/11/17/SEXUAL-HARASSMENT-LEGAL-GAPS/](http://fortune.com/2017/11/17/sexual-harassment-legal-gaps/)

<sup>22</sup> JONATHAN WOETZEL, "HOW ADVANCING WOMEN'S EQUALITY CAN ADD \$12 TRILLION TO GLOBAL GROWTH," MCKINSEY&COMPANY, PUBLISHED: SEPTEMBER 2015. [HTTPS://WWW.MCKINSEY.COM/FEATURED-INSIGHTS/EMPLOYMENT-AND-GROWTH/HOW-ADVANCING-WOMENS-EQUALITY-CAN-ADD-12-TRILLION-TO-GLOBAL-GROWTH](https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth)

world does not create laws and provide the legal tools for men and women to address the issues of gender parity and harassment and assault in the workplace.

## CONCLUSION

With the rising importance and prevalence of social media in society, it is being used to insight meaningful change and spread experiences globally. Gender inequality and parity is one of the most important issues facing the global community and must be addressed. By addressing the root causes of such parity: inequalities in education, sexual misconduct and harassment, and equal opportunity for work, the United Nations may be able to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 to achieve gender equality. With the rise of hashtags such as #MeToo, #TimesUp and many more, the global feminist community is conducting a rallying call. However, in order for such hashtag activism to be effective, the international community must first create an international legal standard that addresses violence and harassment in the workplace. Also, countries must pass stricter legislation regarding harassment in the workplace and must then enforce that legislation effectively. By providing the legal tools to effectively fight the barriers currently facing women in their responses to barriers in the workplace and their development, countries, and the global community, will see a much brighter future.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What hashtags have been created and/or used by your nation?
2. How has your nation responded to the use of such hashtags?
3. Has your nation censored or blocked hashtags from being used?
4. What laws does your nation currently have in place as protections for women in the workforce, or in the community?
5. In what ways is your nation's legislation lacking in the field of women empowerment?

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# STRENGTHENING THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS: ELABORATING ON THE CONVENTION OF AGING

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
THIRD COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK  
JOHN SPEVACEK – ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

When one considers vulnerable populations and minority groups globally, many images come to mind, however, the elderly are rarely among those images. It is the role of the Third Committee to look over reports of human rights and ensure that no group is forgotten on the path to ensuring equal rights for all. These responsibilities are designated in Article I of the United Nations Charter which encourages equal rights and self determination for all. The Third Committee outlines plans and create guidelines to ensure the safety and security of older persons in the face of potential abuses all around the world. The third committee must provide a universal set of guidelines for countries to follow that ensures the protection of the rights of the elderly as the world's population is increasingly comprised of those over the age of 65. These guidelines must outline workable strategies that utilize governments, the private sector, and the global community to address economic, social, and health needs that are predicted to arise as the world's population ages.

## SOURCES OF HUMAN LONGEVITY

The average life expectancy of humans has drastically risen in the past 200 years. In 1800, global life expectancy was around 32 years of age, while in 2012 the global life expectancy was 70 years of age<sup>1</sup>. There are many factors that contribute to this increase. Decline

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<sup>1</sup> MAX ROSER. "LIFE EXPECTANCY," OUR WORLD IN DATA, ACCESSED JULY 30, 2018.  
[HTTPS://OURWORLDINDATA.ORG/LIFE-EXPECTANCY](https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy)

in infant mortality, better understanding of nutrition and, most importantly, the advancement of modern medicine have all lead to better living conditions around the world. The first vaccination was performed in 1796 by Edward Jenner who used cowpox to inoculate an eight year old boy to small pox. While what Jenner did was common practice in many rural areas, his usage of the scientific method during his testing of inoculations put the smallpox vaccination into the mainstream scientific community. Louis Pasteur expanded on this with the development of his rabies antitoxin in 1885. Despite early successes, vaccines and immunizations would require more government support and global outreach to achieve their full potential<sup>2</sup>.

In the United States and many European countries, immunizations became a requirement for children entering public schools. As more immunizations were discovered, more were required by these governments. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) then worked to bring immunizations worldwide following their creations. The WHO launched several vaccination and immunization campaigns such as the campaign to eradicate smallpox between 1966 and 1977. The campaign was largely successful with smallpox being effectively eradicated, however the WHO remains ready to deal with any potential resurgences<sup>3</sup>. Since then, the WHO has continued its crusade with the Global Vaccine Action Plan which aims to expand vaccinations in developing countries to the point where 90% of target populations are vaccinated against polio, measles mumps, rubella, and neonatal tetanus by 2020<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> ALEXANDRA MINNA STERN AND HOWARD MARKEL. "THE HISTORY OF VACCINES AND IMMUNIZATION: FAMILIAR PATTERNS, NEW CHALLENGES," HEALTH AFFAIRS, LAST MODIFIED, JUNE 2005.  
[HTTPS://WWW.HEALTHAFFAIRS.ORG/DOI/FULL/10.1377/HLTHAFF.24.3.611](https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.24.3.611)

<sup>3</sup> "SMALLPOX VACCINES," WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, ACCESSED JULY 23, 2018.  
[HTTP://WWW.WHO.INT/CSR/DISEASE/SMALLPOX/VACCINES/EN/](http://www.who.int/CSR/DISEASE/SMALLPOX/VACCINES/EN/)

<sup>4</sup> GLOBAL VACCINE ACTION PLAN 2011-2020, (GENEVA: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2013),  
[HTTP://WWW.WHO.INT/IMMUNIZATION/GLOBAL\\_VACCINE\\_ACTION\\_PLAN/GVAP\\_GUIDING\\_PRINCIPLES\\_MEASURE\\_S\\_OF\\_SUCCESS\\_AND\\_GOALS.PDF?UA=1](http://www.who.int/immunization/global_vaccine_action_plan/gvap_guiding_principles_measure_s_of_success_and_goals.pdf?ua=1)

Along with vaccinations, understanding about how diseases are spread has helped to reduce deaths. 1847 saw Ignaz Semmelweis discover the link between patient mortality and medical staff washing their hands. The first hand hygiene laws were implemented in the 1980s in the US and are now common practice for doctors across the globe<sup>5</sup>. The development of germ theory by Louis Pasteur led to the understanding of how disease spread driving development of strategies to dealing with outbreaks of disease as well as ways of combating diseases.

The advancement of agricultural technology also contributed to the increased longevity of the human species. In many places, the danger of famine is, similar to the danger of major infectious disease, simply not a major concern. Modern agricultural technology allows for more food to be produced and modern preservation techniques like refrigeration allow for food to be stored for increased lengths of time. Indeed, famine and malnutrition, especially in children, infants, and the unborn, leads to decreases in the efficacy of the immune system. Famine also leads to other long term health deficiencies including mood disorders, metabolic disorders, heart disorders, and genetic disorders<sup>6</sup>. What all these discoveries lead to was lower infant mortality, lessened chance of dying to common diseases, and longer, healthier lives.

## IMPLICATIONS IN HEALTHCARE

As mortality rates decrease, and as major infectious diseases are being controlled, new issues come to the forefront of medical care. The presence of chronic non-communicable disease has seen an overall increase in comparison to other types of disease. This creates a unique

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<sup>5</sup> WHO GUIDELINES ON HAND HYGIENE IN HEALTH CARE: FIRST GLOBAL PATIENT SAFETY CHALLENGE CLEAN CARE IS SAFER CARE, (GENEVA: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2009).  
[HTTPS://WWW.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/BOOKS/NBK144018/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK144018/)

<sup>6</sup> GABRIELE DOBLHAMMER ET AL, "LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF FAMINE ON LIFE EXPECTANCY. A RE-ANALYSIS OF THE GREAT FINNISH FAMINE OF 1866-1868" (PRESENTATION, EUROPEAN POPULATION CONFERENCE, VIENNA, AT, 2010).  
[HTTP://EPC2010.PRINCETON.EDU/PAPERS/100549](http://EPC2010.PRINCETON.EDU/PAPERS/100549)

problem for modern healthcare implementation as medical issues are becoming less temporary in all parts of the world.<sup>7</sup> Heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes along with other chronic mental diseases like dementia make up the majority of deaths in richest countries with chronic and degenerative disease set to make up the majority of deaths in countries with lower gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030. Death from infectious and communicable diseases and injury are expected to continue to decrease, but the elderly are more susceptible to both as their bodies and immune systems age which could lead to potential fluctuations.

Issues of disability and chronic illness are a greater threat to elderly populations and therefore must drive much of the conversation regarding proper care for these populations. The most cost effective solution to the issue of chronic disease is to not get a chronic disease in the first place as constant care leads to increased costs for all parties involved in the healthcare process. This would encourage the usage of primary care physicians to perform regular checkups and ensure that patients are living lives that reduce their risk of getting some chronic illness. However, diseases such as cancer and degenerative disorders like dementia are much more difficult to contend with in terms of preemptive control. The question of individual responsibility against collective responsibility will be one that many countries will contend with in ensuring quality of life for the elderly as well as ensuring the adequate distribution of healthcare.<sup>8</sup>

Healthcare costs are expected to rise all over the world in response to larger demographics of the population being older. According to the WHO the world spent 600 billion United States Dollars (USD) caring for dementia patients, both formally and informally, over the course of 2010. In 2015 the Alzheimer's Disease International concluded that there were 46.8

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<sup>7</sup> DOROTHY P. RICE AND CARROLL L. ESTES. "HEALTH OF THE ELDERLY: POLICY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES," LAST MODIFIED JANUARY 1, 1984. [HTTPS://WWW.HEALTHAFFAIRS.ORG/DOI/10.1377/HLTHAFF.3.4.25](https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.3.4.25)

<sup>8</sup> HARALD SCHMIDT. "PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS: CASES SPANNING THE GLOBE," NATIONAL CENTER FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY INFORMATION, LAST MODIFIED APRIL 13, 2016. [HTTPS://WWW.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/BOOKS/NBK435779/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK435779/)

million people in the world with dementia and predicted the number to rise, especially in countries with lower GDP.<sup>9</sup> Dementia and Alzheimers are just two of the potential long term diseases that the elderly face with cancer also seeing an increase in prevalence. The WHO estimated the 13 million new cases of cancer in 2009 cost upwards of 286 billion USD worldwide.<sup>10</sup> It is predicted for the number of cases of cancer to increase by 23.1 million cases on average going into 2030 according to Cancer Research UK, a charity based in the United Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> Other disease such as heart disease must also be considered and it is up to the countries of the world to determine how to fund medical procedures for their elderly populations to ensure happy and healthy lives.

## WORLD ASSEMBLIES ON AGING

The First World Assembly on Aging was held in Vienna in 1982 by recommendation of the UN General Assembly and laid out the groundwork to “launch an international action programme aimed at guaranteeing economic and social security to older persons, as well as opportunities to contribute to national development”. A point worth noting is that the Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging focused on the growth of the population older than 60, whilst the World Bank collects data on persons aged 65 and above. The document outlines that each individual country should observe and acknowledge their individual demographics and make active plans to deal with any issues that might arise from said demographics while maintaining a place in the global economic order.

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<sup>9</sup> “DEMENTIA STATISTICS,” ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE INTERNATIONAL, RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 29, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.ALZ.CO.UK/RESEARCH/STATISTICS](https://www.alz.co.uk/research/statistics)

<sup>10</sup> “GLOBAL HEALTH AND AGING.” WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. ACCESSED SEPTEMBER 20, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.WHO.INT/AGEING/PUBLICATIONS/GLOBAL\\_HEALTH.PDF](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/global_health.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> “WORLDWIDE CANCER STATISTICS,” CANCER RESEARCH UK. RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 29, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.CANCERRESEARCHUK.ORG/HEALTH-PROFESSIONAL/CANCER-STATISTICS/WORLDWIDE-CANCER/INCIDENCE](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/worldwide-cancer/incidence)

In total, the Vienna document provided 62 recommendations, along with contexts for these recommendations, to countries as the world population grows older. The document itself recognizes the vagueness of some of its statements and addresses this by encouraging a more national solution to aging problems rather than relying on the international community. Many of the introductory recommendations are based primarily around encouraging countries to acknowledge the issues that may arise from aging populations and to prepare accordingly. While the document puts a considerable amount of emphasis on individual governments to address the issue, it also encourages private volunteers and enterprises to take part in assisting the population as it grows older. Private involvement is significantly understated throughout the document, as recommendations include guidelines around how public housing should work as well as integration between public healthcare and social security. It also suggests that governments provide a minimum income for the elderly.

The document addresses a sweeping range of issues around aging individuals while maintaining a focus on human rights and dignity for the elderly<sup>12</sup>. The Vienna document was then reinforced in 2002 with the Second World Assembly on Aging held in Madrid. While the Vienna document served as a list of recommendations, the Madrid assembly expanded on the issue. The Madrid document shifted focus to include developing countries and provided a greater emphasis on private sector involvement and government integration with the private sector. The two share a common thread regarding the right of the elderly to self determination, protection of human rights, and the right for anyone to work until they choose not to.

The Madrid document went into much greater detail on many topics of aging and it addressed new issues as well. Neglect and elder abuse, a trend more common in developed

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<sup>12</sup> "INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON AGING." INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON AGING, ACCESSED AUGUST 4, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/EN/EVENTS/ELDERABUSE/PDF/VIPAA.PDF](http://www.un.org/en/events/elderabuse/pdf/vipaa.pdf)

nations, is discussed while the effect HIV/AIDS has on the elderly in developing nations is also discussed. Most importantly, the Madrid document expanded the focus of who should be working to implement the recommendations presented by the two documents. While the Vienna document provided great emphasis on individual country participation, the Madrid document calls for a greater combination of national, international, and private organizations, governments, and bodies to look to execute the plans put forth by the two assemblies<sup>13</sup>.

## MODERN CASE STUDIES OF AGING

With all of this in mind, an understanding can be reached about what is required to get a person to have a higher chance of living longer. Proper medical care and nutrition are vital to inherent longevity. While the World Assemblies on Aging provided solutions, the issue of aging populations continues to plague many nations. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in Japan. As of 2017 Japan has the highest percentage of adults 65 and older in the world. Japan is joined by many European nations that face the issue of rapid aging.

Table 1  
% of pop over 65

Country	1960	2017
Japan	6	27
Italy	9	23
Portugal	8	22

<sup>13</sup> "POLITICAL DECLARATION AND MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN ON AGING." SECOND WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGING, ACCESSED AUGUST 4, 2018. [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/ESA/SOCDEV/DOCUMENTS/AGEING/MIPAA/POLITICAL-DECLARATION-EN.PDF](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ageing/mipaa/political-declaration-en.pdf)



Between the 2002 assembly and the 72nd session of the Third Committee, Japan's population saw a shift of 18% to 27% of the population being 65 and older<sup>14</sup>. This shows that the World Assemblies are even more important and must play a greater role in the world. However, the aging population is just one of the things that factors into Japan's high elderly population. Birth rates in Japan, as well as Europe have decreased while their populations have aged. Japan also has the sixth highest suicide rate in the world, the second highest of the major industrial nations. Suicide also is the highest cause of death in the demographic group of people aged 15-35; the group that is expected to care for Japan's aging population. While the Japanese government has taken steps to reduce the suicide rate, and has seen some success, this opens questions regarding how other factors can play into demographic imbalance in countries<sup>15</sup>.

The lack of effect of the World Assemblies on Aging was noted in the 72nd session of the Third Committee, with the the second preambulatory clause of the adopted resolution stating, "Recognizing that, in many parts of the world, awareness of the Madrid Plan of Action remains limited or non-existent, which limits the scope of implementation efforts."<sup>16</sup> This raises even more questions as to whether or not another assembly should be held with the focus of raising awareness for an issue that doesn't seem to have grabbed the attention of the public as was expected. The issue of aging populations has yet to hit developing countries, especially those in Asia and Africa, while it poses a much greater problem to developed countries. This puts particular strain on developed nations to address the issue.

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<sup>14</sup> "POPULATION AGES 65 AND ABOVE (% OF TOTAL)." THE WORLD BANK, ACCESSED JULY 30, 2018. [HTTPS://DATA.WORLDBANK.ORG/INDICATOR/SP.POP.65UP.TO.ZS](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.65UP.TO.ZS)

<sup>15</sup> TOMOKO OTAKE. "SUICIDES DOWN, BUT JAPAN STILL SECOND HIGHEST AMONG MAJOR INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS, REPORT SAYS," LAST MODIFIED MAY 30, 2017. [HTTPS://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/NEWS/2017/05/30/NATIONAL/SOCIAL-ISSUES/PREVENTIVE-EFFORTS-SEEN-HELPING-2016-SAW-ANOTHER-DECLINE-SUICIDES-JAPAN-21897/#.W3PTUEHKG2W](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/05/30/national/social-issues/preventive-efforts-seen-helping-2016-saw-another-decline-suicides-japan-21897/#.W3PTUEHKG2W)

<sup>16</sup> UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 72ND SESSION. THIRD COMMITTEE. *SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY ECUADOR: \* REVISED DRAFT RESOLUTION*. (A/C.3/72/L.13/REV.1). 13 NOVEMBER 2017. [HTTP://UNDOCS.ORG/A/C.3/72/L.13/REV.1](http://undocs.org/A/C.3/72/L.13/REV.1)

Japan sits as the country to be impacted by an older population the most and its actions, whether they result in failure or success, will most likely influence how many other nations deal with the pending issue. As a country develops, it goes through what is referred to as a demographic window where there is a boom in the working age population, followed by a decreased fertility rate, and finally a higher percentage of the population that is older. In Uruguay, a study by the World bank suggested that this demographic shift would lead to an increase in the cost of social services such as health and education from 25% of total GDP allocation to 43% of total GDP allocation from 2013 to 2100<sup>17</sup>. This would have a huge impact on the economy and Uruguay isn't even the most hard pressed of all the nations in regard to its aging population. As shown in Table 1, Italy and Portugal followed a similar trend in demographic change that Japan did and many other European and developed countries are close behind. This would encourage that any future recommendations regarding aging focus on how to alter the economy to deal with an older population as well as providing enough care and focus on the elderly.

## CONCLUSION

The issue of aging populations is a complicated one that has been addressed thoroughly but still has unexplored, and underemphasized aspects to it. Ultimately, each country will have to face its own problems head on but the impact of a connected world could potentially change outcomes some countries are afraid of. The effectiveness of the the previous Assemblies on Aging has already been called into question and perhaps different plans are required for different times. The goal of all these deliberations must of course focus on the security, happiness, and

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<sup>17</sup> LETICIA FERREIRA. "HOW DOES AN AGING POPULATION AFFECT A COUNTRY?," LAST MODIFIED SEPTEMBER 1, 2016. [HTTP://WWW.WORLDBANK.ORG/EN/NEWS/FEATURE/2016/09/05/URUGUAY-COMO-AFECTA-PAIS-ENVEJECIMIENTO-POBLACION](http://WWW.WORLDBANK.ORG/EN/NEWS/FEATURE/2016/09/05/URUGUAY-COMO-AFECTA-PAIS-ENVEJECIMIENTO-POBLACION)

overall treatment of the elderly across the world. Human rights must be upheld, especially for the most vulnerable in society. It is the focus of this committee to provide a proactive framework to address the future of societies as they age and how to deal with the consequences of what aging populations mean to the future of every country.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Consider actions taken and suggested in the past Assemblies on Aging. What must be added to ensure effective care and precautions are taken in the future as the world's population ages?
2. What solutions, not already explored, can be put in place to ensure the safety, security, and livelihood of elderly populations?
3. How can aging populations help themselves rather than relying on younger generations to provide most of the assistance necessary?
4. What other factors affect the age demographic shifts in developed countries and how can these factors be addressed?
5. How can the work of the Past Assemblies on Aging be made more well known across the world to encourage countries to address this inevitable issue?
6. How can the international community address aging on both a country by country basis as well as at a global scale?
7. What roles should governments, organizations, companies, and the international community play in addressing aging and how can these groups be integrated effectively?
8. How will the economies of the future shift with aging populations and what must be done to ensure economic stability?
9. How should chronic and degenerative diseases be dealt with and what steps should the international community take to ensure quality of life for aging populations?

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# HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

## 69TH SESSION ISSUES BOOK

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REVIEW OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

COUNTRIES IN CRISIS: ADDRESSING LESSER KNOWN CONFLICTS

THE INTERSECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, SECURITY,  
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST  
69TH SESSION



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

69TH ANNUAL SESSION

OUR COMMON HUMANITY: BACK TO THE PRINCIPLES OF  
THE UN CHARTER

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (HRC) IS A SUBSIDIARY BODY OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROMOTING UNIVERSAL RESPECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS FOR ALL, WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF ANY KIND AND IN A FAIR AND EQUAL MANNER. THE COUNCIL IS MANDATED TO CONSIDER VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING GROSS AND SYSTEMIC VIOLATIONS, AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UN SYSTEM. THE HRC ALSO PROMOTES THE EFFECTIVE COORDINATION AND MAINSTREAMING OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN THE UN SYSTEM.

THE HRC WAS ESTABLISHED BY GA RES. 60/251 (2006) AND REPLACED THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS. THE HRC COMPRISES 47 MEMBER STATES ELECTED BY A MAJORITY VOTE IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.  
(UN HANDBOOK, 2017-18)

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY FOR THE 69TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

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# REVIEW OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ISSUES BOOK  
SAVANNAH OVERLY – HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY

As the 70th anniversary of the ratification of the United Nations' (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) approaches, countries across the globe continue to lack concern for human rights issues. In past decades, nations across the globe have massively and carelessly contributed to the growing list of crimes against humanity. These violations of human rights, including episodes of genocide and ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and child marriage have repeatedly occurred in many nations--a prime example of how the world clearly does not learn from its mistakes. Member states involved with the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) continue to preach enforcement of the Council's doctrine, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; however, many of these states continue to hypocritically perpetuate these issues. Following the failure of the enforcement of the Council's declaration, it is important to review how the document is lacking and to begin the conversation on what changes could be made to bring the world closer to ending these problems.

In recent years, nations have begun to doubt the declaration's modern validity and legitimacy, claiming that it is out of date and lacking commentary on issues that have recently come to the attention of the world,<sup>1</sup> such as women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and the right to the Internet. Furthermore, the belief that the hypocrisy-ridden HRC is doomed to failure has led to the withdrawal of the United States, causing doubt that the remaining membership will be able to successfully move towards dealing with current human rights issues. In an interview with NPR,

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<sup>1</sup> TAI-HENG CHENG, "THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION AT SIXTY" *CORNELL INTERNATIONAL LAW JOURNAL*, VOL 41, ISSUE 2, LAW AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY, LAST MODIFIED 2008, [HTTPS://SCHOLARSHIP.LAW.CORNELL.EDU/CGI/VIEWCONTENT.CGI?REFERER=HTTPS://WWW.GOOGLE.COM/&HTTPSREDIR=1&ARTICLE=1723&CONTEXT=CILJ](https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1723&context=cilj).

U.N. expert Richard Gowan states his belief that the U.S. withdrawal could “tip the balance further towards autocrats,” and “European countries that remain on the Human Rights Council will struggle to set the agenda without U.S. help...that this is just the latest move by the Trump administration to back away from multilateralism.”<sup>2</sup>

## HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was inspired by the experiences of wars preceding 1948, the year in which it was crafted. Its 30 articles lay out everything that “all human beings” have a right to.<sup>3</sup> This document was a huge milestone for the United Nations because it was the first time that nations across the globe could come together in agreement on a list of inalienable human rights.<sup>4</sup> The Universal Declaration was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948. Motivated by the experiences of the preceding world wars, the Universal Declaration was the first time that countries agreed on a comprehensive statement of unalienable human rights. It begins by recognizing that “the inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,” and declares that human rights are universal, to be enjoyed by all people, no matter who they are, where they live, or what they practice.<sup>5</sup>

The Universal Declaration includes civil and political rights, like the right to life, liberty, free speech, and privacy. The declaration also includes economic, social, and cultural rights, like the right to social security, health, and education. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration is not a treaty, so it does not directly create legal obligations for countries; however, it is an expression of

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<sup>2</sup> MICHELE KELEMEN, “U.S. PULLS OUT OF U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL” *NPR*, STATE DEPARTMENT, 20 JUNE 2018, [WWW.NPR.ORG/2018/06/20/621726939/U-S-PULLS-OUT-OF-U-N-HUMAN-RIGHTS-COUNCIL](http://WWW.NPR.ORG/2018/06/20/621726939/U-S-PULLS-OUT-OF-U-N-HUMAN-RIGHTS-COUNCIL).

<sup>3</sup> “UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS” *CLAIMING HUMAN RIGHTS*, [WWW.CLAIMINGHUMANRIGHTS.ORG/UNIVERSAL\\_DECLARATION.HTML](http://WWW.CLAIMINGHUMANRIGHTS.ORG/UNIVERSAL_DECLARATION.HTML).

<sup>4</sup> “WHAT IS THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION?” *HUMAN RIGHTS AUSTRALIA*, AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, 14 DEC. 2012, [WWW.HUMANRIGHTS.GOV.AU/PUBLICATIONS/WHAT-UNIVERSAL-DECLARATION-HUMAN-RIGHTS](http://WWW.HUMANRIGHTS.GOV.AU/PUBLICATIONS/WHAT-UNIVERSAL-DECLARATION-HUMAN-RIGHTS).

<sup>5</sup> *IBID.*

the fundamental values, which are shared by all members of the international community. It has had a profound influence on the development of international human rights law. Some scholars argue that because countries have consistently invoked the Declaration for more than 60 years, it has become binding as a part of customary international law. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Universal Declaration has also given rise to a range of other international agreements, which are legally binding on the countries that ratify them, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).<sup>6</sup>

## THE STRUGGLES OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION

Even though the Declaration was written in order to limit the number of crimes against humanity committed across the globe, countries have seen its efforts fail miserably to date as the human rights agenda has fallen on hard times. For example, in much of the Islamic world, Muslim women lack equality, people who practice other religions are persecuted, and political freedoms are few. The Chinese model of development, which combines political repression and state capitalism, has attracted numerous admirers in the developing world. Political authoritarianism has gained massive ground in Venezuela, Turkey, Russia, and Hungary, to name a few. Countries as diverse as Russia and Nigeria refuse to legitimize LGBTQ+ rights and backlashes frequently plague nations like them for the same reason. The United States and other European countries that have traditionally been heroes in the human rights world have stumbled and fallen back from the quest. Europe itself has turned inward as it has struggled with a sovereign debt crisis, xenophobia towards communities of Muslims and other refugees, and disappointment with the EU and its overall purpose. Since the 9/11 attacks, the United States has

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<sup>6</sup> *IBID.*

killed civilians in war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, while losing much of its moral authority. The world thought it was done with slavery, for example, but human trafficking (including sex slavery and child marriage) exists in many parts of the world. A recent report estimates that nearly 30 million people are forced against their will to work.<sup>7</sup> Even with the Universal Declaration in place, abominations like these still exist in our world. Does this mean that the UDHR is failing, or is it the failure of the member states, or both?

## WHAT THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION CURRENTLY LACKS

The UDHR, as previously stated, is a 70-year-old document, and since its creation, global developments have led to many additions of what people consider to be fundamental human rights. The UDHR only has 30 articles, and critics argue that the document is not up to date. For example, the UDHR does not have any articles concerning LGBTQ+ rights. Critics also argue that the UDHR is written in sexist language and leaves out female rhetoric in its articles. As the world moves forward in recognizing the rights of as many people as possible, rhetoric must also evolve accordingly in order to ensure that everyone is included and their rights protected. Furthermore, some articles are contradictory to each other. For example, Article 26 states that parents of children ultimately make the decision of where children go to school; however, the UDHR at the same time prohibits educational discrimination.<sup>8</sup> If parents wanted to send their child to a Catholic school, for example, they might not be able to do so because Catholic schools are often prejudicial to certain views (e.g., regarding homosexuality). The situation, then, requires the school to balance out purposeful discrimination. Fundamentally, however, because

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<sup>7</sup>ERIC POSNER, "THE CASE AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS" *THE GUARDIAN*, GUARDIAN NEWS AND MEDIA, 4 DEC. 2014, [WWW.THEGUARDIAN.COM/NEWS/2014/DEC/04/-SP-CASE-AGAINST-HUMAN-RIGHTS](http://WWW.THEGUARDIAN.COM/NEWS/2014/DEC/04/-SP-CASE-AGAINST-HUMAN-RIGHTS).

<sup>8</sup> "UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: ARTICLE 26" *CLAIMING HUMAN RIGHTS*, [WWW.CLAIMINGHUMANRIGHTS.ORG/UDHR\\_ARTICLE\\_26.HTML](http://WWW.CLAIMINGHUMANRIGHTS.ORG/UDHR_ARTICLE_26.HTML).

the UDHR grants parents choice while prohibiting educational discrimination, Article 26 contradicts itself. Such a problem undermines the UDHR.

Critics of the UDHR also question how the document can specify cultural relativism and be truly “universal” throughout all cultures of the world. For example, in 1948 the Saudi delegation refused to sign the UDHR, objected to the provisions on marriage (“Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses”).<sup>9</sup> In Saudi culture, it is expected and proper that families will make marriage selections for their children.<sup>10</sup> As the UDHR is often thought of a Western document that reflects Western values, critics claim that the document needs to be broadened culturally to include the values of non-Western cultures as well. Broadening the UDHR will also make more states willing to abide by the document. Like any facet of international law, concessions must be made in order to promote the wellbeing of as many world citizens as possible while not undermining a state’s sovereignty unless necessary.

Finally, the UDHR is silent on water and the Internet. Critics highlight these omissions. In recent years, there has been serious global discussion that access to the Internet should be considered a basic human right for many reasons, including access to critical information (weather, news, etc.) and online job searching, which has doubled since 2005.<sup>11</sup> The right to water is also not enshrined in the UDHR. While there is right-to-life language to ensure human survival, the UDHR does not specifically reference food and water rights. Even though the UN has recently declared water a fundamental human right, the UDHR does not reflect this

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<sup>9</sup> “UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: ARTICLE 16” *CLAIMING HUMAN RIGHTS*, [WWW.CLAIMINGHUMANRIGHTS.ORG/UDHR\\_ARTICLE\\_16.HTML](http://WWW.CLAIMINGHUMANRIGHTS.ORG/UDHR_ARTICLE_16.HTML).

<sup>10</sup> KENNETH MCLAUGHLIN AND HUSAIN AL-HAKAMI, “DEBATABLE MARRIAGES: MARRIAGE AND CHILD MARRIAGE IN SAUDI ARABIA.” *MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, KING SAUD UNIVERSITY AND MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, E-SPACE*.MMU.AC.UK/606943/2/MARRIAGE%20AND%20FAMILY%20FINAL%20JAN%202016.PDF.

<sup>11</sup> ROY MAURER, “ONLINE JOB SEARCHING HAS DOUBLED SINCE 2005.” *SHRM*, SHRM, 11 APR. 2018, [WWW.SHRM.ORG/RESOURCESANDTOOLS/HR-TOPICS/TALENT-ACQUISITION/PAGES/ONLINE-JOB-SEARCHING-DOUBLED.ASPX](http://WWW.SHRM.ORG/RESOURCESANDTOOLS/HR-TOPICS/TALENT-ACQUISITION/PAGES/ONLINE-JOB-SEARCHING-DOUBLED.ASPX).

development.<sup>12</sup> This issue becomes especially glaring when it intersects with the issue of climate change and the fact that water is becoming increasingly scarce in more and more areas across the globe. This year alone, the international community witnessed a record number of droughts in all parts of the world, from California to South Africa.<sup>12</sup> Until the effects of climate change on water can be mitigated, it is up to the UN, via the Human Rights Council, to ensure that the right to water is guaranteed to everyone. The right to water is especially important, as it is required to sustain human life both in the form of direct consumption and in its uses to grow food and feed livestock that are also imperative to human survival.<sup>12</sup>

## THE HYPOCRISY OF MEMBER STATES

Since its creation, the Human Rights Council has been charged with monitoring human rights violations across the globe. In theory, the 47 Council states should also be stewards of proper treatment of humans and human rights. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Many countries with seats on the Council--China, Venezuela, Ethiopia, Egypt, Cuba, and the United Arab Emirates in particular--proceed hypocritically. According to The Washington Examiner, currently China has over a thousand known political prisoners, including protesters of the occupation of Tibet, advocates for Uighur minority rights, and citizens demanding universal freedoms of expression, to name a few. Furthermore, Cuba is known to have deprived its citizens of fundamental freedoms and kept political dissidents imprisoned for years. Venezuela and Ethiopia both detain and harass hundreds of citizens with opposing viewpoints to their governments. Egypt outlaws independent NGOs and arrests critics of its government. Saudi Arabia imprisons and tortures citizens suspected of “planting seeds of sedition.” And the United

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<sup>12</sup> THALIF DEEN, “UN DECLARES WATER AND SANITATION A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT,” *GLOBAL POLICY FORUM*, 28 JULY 2010, [WWW.GLOBALPOLICY.ORG/COMPONENT/CONTENT/ARTICLE/211-DEVELOPMENT/49350-UN-DECLARES-WATER-AND-SANITATION-A-BASIC-HUMAN-RIGHT.HTML](http://WWW.GLOBALPOLICY.ORG/COMPONENT/CONTENT/ARTICLE/211-DEVELOPMENT/49350-UN-DECLARES-WATER-AND-SANITATION-A-BASIC-HUMAN-RIGHT.HTML).

Arab Emirates kidnaps critics of its authoritarianism.<sup>13</sup> These contemporary examples of human-rights atrocities do not stand alone. Many states listed above, and others, have also committed atrocities that have gone unpunished by the HRC. Clearly, several member states violate the Council's *raison d'être*. This hypocrisy inevitably cancels out any Council progress and ultimately hinders any possible future success in securing human rights across the globe.

## CONCLUSION

The UDHR reflects the world's 1948 mindset. Seventy years after its inception, much has changed. The Declaration therefore must be modified, if not modernized. Provisions on LGBTQ+ rights, water and food security, and the right to the Internet need to be explicit. In a revised document, cultural relativism should be considered to account for the wide range of differences in cultures around the world. Member states should be held accountable for their actions, and those with seats in the HRC should work to keep each other accountable. In a world that is becoming increasingly more connected and developed, human rights violations should be decreasing in number. The fact of the matter is, however, that they are not. It is the job of HRC member states to tackle the core problem, starting with the foundational document.

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<sup>13</sup> EUGENE CHUDNOVSKY AND FRANK FRANKLIN II, "THE UN IS A HYPOCRITE ON HUMAN RIGHTS." *WASHINGTON EXAMINER*, 29 DEC. 2016, [WWW.WASHINGTONEXAMINER.COM/THE-UN-IS-A-HYPOCRITE-ON-HUMAN-RIGHTS](http://WWW.WASHINGTONEXAMINER.COM/THE-UN-IS-A-HYPOCRITE-ON-HUMAN-RIGHTS).

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is your state's position on the UDHR? Does your state believe it needs to be amended? Why or why not?
2. If your state believes the UDHR lacks contemporary provisions, what does your state suggest be added or changed?
3. How have the UDHR's inadequacies (lack of certain provisions, inability to be mandated, etc.) affected your state historically? What about currently?
4. Does your state follow the provisions outlined in the UDHR? If not, which provisions are violated?
5. How has your state worked to end human rights violations in your country as well as worldwide? Are human rights a priority in your state? Which rights are overlooked?



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# **COUNTRIES IN CRISIS: ADDRESSING LESSER KNOWN CONFLICTS**

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ISSUES BOOK  
JOSIE BRUN – HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY

Today's world is characterized by violence and conflict. Between gun violence, armed conflict, terrorism, political tension, climate change, and ongoing crises, there are plenty of problems for the world's leaders to focus on. The Humanitarian Coalition defines a humanitarian crisis as "An event or series of events that represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security or wellbeing of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area."<sup>1</sup> Crises and conflict often lead to a large displacement of people, causing several other problems as a result. The United Nations Development Programme states that "The average amount of time people worldwide live in displacement is now 17 years and the average conflict lasts for seven years."<sup>2</sup> Basic human rights are often disregarded in times of conflict. Mass migration and conflict poses a greater risk of exploitation and violence against women and children, as well as other minorities. While there are several crises that deserve, and do receive, the attention and help of the United Nations, the Venezuelan and Myanmar refugee crises often go unnoticed by the general public and are thus not made a priority, despite being the fastest growing refugee crises today. In addition, political and social unrest in the United States has many UN member states on edge, and it is important to address the instability of the UN's biggest financial contributor and one of the most influential countries in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> "WHAT IS A HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY?" HUMANITARIAN COALITION, [HTTPS://WWW.HUMANITARIANCOALITION.CA/INFO-PORTAL/FACTSHEETS/WHAT-IS-A-HUMANITARIAN-CRISIS](https://www.humanitariancoalition.ca/info-portal/factsheets/what-is-a-humanitarian-crisis).

<sup>2</sup> "OUR FOCUS: CRISIS RESPONSE" UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/UNDP/EN/HOME/CRISIS-RESPONSE.HTML](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/crisis-response.html).

## THE CRISIS OF VENEZUELA

Venezuela is undergoing a political and economic conflict that has great consequences yet often goes unnoticed. The root of the crisis dates back to 1999 with the election of former President Hugo Chavez, who introduced generous social programs that depended almost entirely on Venezuela's abundance of oil, while also consolidating power into the executive branch of government.<sup>3</sup> Chavez passed away in 2013 and was succeeded by Nicolas Maduro. Maduro further consolidated executive power and continued on the path of human rights violations that Chavez had allowed during his presidency.<sup>4</sup> In 2014 the growing crisis came to a head when the price of oil dropped from "An average of \$109 a barrel in 2012 to just \$40 a barrel in 2016."<sup>5</sup> Due to their over-reliance on oil, Venezuela now has the highest inflation rate in the world, at an astonishing 18,000%,<sup>6</sup> leading to a lack of basic necessities, including food and medicine, several protests, and a mass exodus of refugees to surrounding nations.<sup>7</sup>

While the crisis in Venezuela has been ongoing for several years, this past May the re-election of President Nicolas Maduro caused the conflict to further escalate. Maduro won what some Venezuelans and world leaders are calling an illegitimate election. Many point to red tents that were set up outside of polling stations, where citizens with "fatherland cards", which are social benefit cards, could scan for a chance to win a prize from Maduro, as vote-buying and

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<sup>3</sup> "HOW VENEZUELA'S CRISIS DEVELOPED AND WORSENER," *BBC NEWS ONLINE*, LAST MODIFIED MAY 21, 2018, [HTTPS://WWW.BBC.COM/NEWS/WORLD-LATIN-AMERICA-36319877](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36319877).

<sup>4</sup> KIMBERLY CURTIS, "THE CRISIS IN VENEZUELA IS IN DESPERATE NEED OF INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION," *UN DISPATCH*, JUNE 6, 2018, [HTTPS://WWW.UNDISPATCH.COM/THE-CRISIS-IN-VENEZUELA-IS-IN-DESPERATE-NEED-OF-INTERNATIONAL-ATTENTION](https://www.undispatch.com/the-crisis-in-venezuela-is-in-desperate-need-of-international-attention).

<sup>5</sup> CURTIS, "THE CRISIS IN VENEZUELA IS IN DESPERATE NEED OF INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION."

<sup>6</sup> "HOW VENEZUELA'S CRISIS DEVELOPED AND WORSENER."

<sup>7</sup> CURTIS, "THE CRISIS IN VENEZUELA IS IN DESPERATE NEED OF INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION."

targeting of the poor.<sup>8</sup> In addition, less than half of eligible voters turned out to vote, and many blame the fact that Maduro's most promising opponents were barred from running at all.<sup>9</sup>

Several human rights violations have taken place, and will continue to take place, as long as Venezuela remains unstable. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), "Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person," and "no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile."<sup>10</sup> A report done by the Organization of American States, released in May 2018, concludes that more than 8,000 extrajudicial executions have taken place since 2015, more than 12,000 Venezuelans have been arbitrarily detained, and there are more than 1,300 political prisoners in custody under Maduro's administration.<sup>11</sup> In addition, it is estimated that 1.5 million Venezuelans have fled to surrounding countries seeking refuge, placing immense pressure on nations such as Colombia, which was once very accepting but has had to crack down on immigration due to a strain on resources.<sup>12</sup> Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos has been very generous to the thousands of refugees that have come to his country, allowing them access to public healthcare and schools, but says it has cost the government millions of dollars to do so.<sup>13</sup> This is the case for other surrounding countries accepting refugees. Not only are those living within or fleeing from Venezuela in need of humanitarian assistance, but surrounding countries accepting refugees are in need of financial assistance and other resources in order to support these refugees. Nonetheless, the Venezuelan

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<sup>8</sup> SCOTT NEUMAN, "VENEZUELA'S MADURO WINS BOYCOTTED ELECTIONS AMID CHARGES OF FRAUD," *NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO* ONLINE, MAY 21, 2018, [HTTPS://WWW.NPR.ORG/SECTIONS/THETWO-WAY/2018/05/21/612918548/VENEZUELAS-MADURO-WINS-BOYCOTTED-ELECTIONS-AMID-CHARGES-OF-FRAUD](https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/05/21/612918548/VENEZUELAS-MADURO-WINS-BOYCOTTED-ELECTIONS-AMID-CHARGES-OF-FRAUD).

<sup>9</sup> NEUMAN, "VENEZUELA'S MADURO WINS BOYCOTTED ELECTIONS AMID CHARGES OF FRAUD."

<sup>10</sup> "THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS," *UNITED NATIONS*, PUBLISHED DEC. 10, 1948, ARTICLE 3.

<sup>11</sup> MONICA REYES. "PANEL OF INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS FINDS 'REASONABLE GROUNDS' FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY COMMITTED IN VENEZUELA," *THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES*, [HTTPS://WWW.OAS.ORG/EN/MEDIA\\_CENTER/PRESS\\_RELEASE.ASP?SCODIGO=E-031/18](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?scodigo=E-031/18).

<sup>12</sup> JULIA SYMMES COBB ET AL. "'MIGRATE OR DIE': VENEZUELAN FLOOD INTO COLOMBIA DESPITE CRACKDOWN," *REUTERS* ONLINE, FEB. 26, 2018, [HTTPS://WWW.REUTERS.COM/ARTICLE/US-COLOMBIA-VENEZUELA-MIGRANTS/MIGRATE-OR-DIE-VENEZUELAN FLOOD INTO COLOMBIA-DESPITE-CRACKDOWN-IDUSKCN1GAIK9](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-venezuela-migrants/migrate-or-die-venezuelans-flood-into-colombia-despite-crackdown-idUSKCN1GAIK9).

<sup>13</sup> COBB ET AL. "'MIGRATE OR DIE': VENEZUELAN FLOOD INTO COLOMBIA DESPITE CRACKDOWN."

crisis remains the largest refugee crisis in the Western Hemisphere, and for those unfortunate enough to remain in the country, a worsening humanitarian catastrophe if a solution is not found.

## MYANMAR AND THE ROHINGYA

The United Nations on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect defines “ethnic cleansing” as “A purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas. To a large extent, it is carried out in the name of misguided nationalism, historic grievances and a powerful driving sense of revenge.”<sup>14</sup> The humanitarian crisis in Myanmar (also Burma) involving the majority Buddhist population and the minority Rohingya Muslims has been described by many as a “textbook example” of ethnic cleansing and the fastest growing refugee crisis.<sup>15</sup>

The conflict has a long history, but in 1982 the Buddhist-led government enacted the 1982 Citizenship Law that denied the Rohingya citizenship in Myanmar, taking away basic citizenship rights that other Burmese citizens are afforded.<sup>16</sup> Then, in 2014, the Rohingya were completely left out of the census, further emphasizing their statelessness.<sup>17</sup> Relations have remained tense, but in August 2017 the Rohingya began fleeing the country due to systematic violence in Rakhine State, carried out by the Myanmar military. The government claims that militant Muslims set fires to villages and incited the attacks, but evidence provided by victims and eyewitnesses shows that this is not the case, and that in most cases it was Buddhists dressed

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<sup>14</sup> BOUTROS BOUTROS-GHALI, “LETTER DATED 24 MAY 1994 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL,” *UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL*, MAY 24, 1994, [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/EN/GA/SEARCH/VIEW\\_DOC.ASP?SYMBOL=S/1994/674](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/1994/674).

<sup>15</sup> “MYANMAR ROHINGYA: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE CRISIS,” *BBC NEWS ONLINE*, LAST MODIFIED APRIL 24, 2018, [HTTPS://WWW.BBC.COM/NEWS/WORLD-ASIA-41566561](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561).

<sup>16</sup> “DISCRIMINATION IN ARAKAN” HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, [HTTPS://WWW.HRW.ORG/REPORTS/2000/BURMA/BURM005-02.HTM](https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/BURM005-02.HTM).

<sup>17</sup> “MYANMAR ROHINGYA: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE CRISIS.”

as Muslims who were starting the fires.<sup>18</sup> In fact, since the initial attacks in August 2017, the government has continued to lie. For example, the government claims that only 400 people have died since August, when in reality the numbers are closer to 6,700 Rohingya alone, with more than 730 of those being children.<sup>19</sup>

The UDHR outlines that every global citizen has the right to life and freedom of religion, among many other inalienable human rights.<sup>20</sup> The Rohingya have been treated as less than human, simply because they practice a different religion than their majority buddhist counterparts. Refugees in Bangladesh report accounts of members of the Myanmar military coming into their homes, removing the men, and killing them in the streets.<sup>21</sup> If the men are not killed right away, they are tortured and then later disposed of.<sup>22</sup> Many Rohingya have also been jailed under false accusations, or not been given a reason for their detainment at all.<sup>23</sup> The military has also used rape and gender-based violence as a way to terrorize the Rohingya, causing more to flee in fear.<sup>24</sup> Access for international assistance to visit the region and investigate has continued to decrease, and most investigators have to piece together the story through witness accounts in refugee camps in Bangladesh.

There is no denying that human rights atrocities have taken place against the Rohingya by the Myanmar military. However, that is only one half of the problem. As of October 2017, an estimated 947,000 Rohingya were taking refuge in Bangladesh, 500,000 in Saudi Arabia, 350,000 in Pakistan, and another 246,000 are dispersed throughout the region in other states.<sup>25</sup> In

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<sup>18</sup> JONATHAN HEAD, "ROHINGYA CRISIS: SEEING THROUGH THE OFFICIAL STORY IN MYANMAR," *BBC NEWS* ONLINE, SEP. 11, 2017, [HTTPS://WWW.BBC.CO.UK/NEWS/WORLD-ASIA-41222210](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-41222210).

<sup>19</sup> HEAD, "ROHINGYA CRISIS: SEEING THROUGH THE OFFICIAL STORY IN MYANMAR."

<sup>20</sup> "THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS," ARTICLES 3, 18.

<sup>21</sup> YANGHEE LEE, "REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN MYANMAR," *UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY*, DISTRIBUTED SEPT. 8, 2017: 10.

<sup>22</sup> LEE, "REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN MYANMAR," 9-10.

<sup>23</sup> LEE, "REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN MYANMAR," 17.

<sup>24</sup> LEE, "REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN MYANMAR," 10-13.

<sup>25</sup> "MYANMAR ROHINGYA: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE CRISIS."

addition, the military has placed landmines along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, preventing anyone from returning.<sup>26</sup> These numbers are staggering, and with the Myanmar government refusing to acknowledge the violence or its wrong-doings, there is no end in sight. As is the case in the Venezuelan conflict, countries accepting Rohingya refugees are also having their resources depleted and are in need of assistance from the UN. The priority for the international community is to force the Myanmar government to accept responsibility and allow the Rohingya to return to Rakhine. Because the Burmese government has continued to decrease access to foreign aid and investigators, it has been hard for the United Nations to observe the crisis and come up with a solution. However, the United Nations Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, visited refugee camps in Bangladesh in March 2018 and released a statement condemning the international community for turning their backs on the Rohingya.<sup>27</sup> He also called on the Burmese government to take responsibility and create a safe country for the Rohingya to return to, and for the international community to provide support and assistance to the refugees, as well as Bangladesh.<sup>28</sup> The United Nations was founded on ensuring that atrocities such as this one would not occur again, and with the Rohingya crisis being the epitome of ethnic cleansing and genocide, it is important that a solution is found and reparations are made.

## RISING UNREST WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

With the United States being arguably one of, if not the most, influential state in the world, policies implemented and actions taken by the U.S. government can have unexpected consequences across the globe. While the actions of the U.S. government may not have a direct

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<sup>26</sup> LEE, "REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPOREUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN MYANMAR," 11.

<sup>27</sup> ADAMA DIENG, "STATEMENT BY ADAMA DIENG, UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL ADVISER ON THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE, ON HIS VISIT TO BANGLADESH TO ASSESS THE SITUATION OF ROHINGYA REFUGEES FROM MYANMAR," *UNITED NATIONS*, MARCH 13, 2018, [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/EN/GENOCIDEPREVENTION/DOCUMENTS/2018-03-13%20STATEMENT\\_VISIT%20ROHINGYA%20BANGLADESH\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/2018-03-13%20STATEMENT_VISIT%20ROHINGYA%20BANGLADESH_FINAL.PDF).

<sup>28</sup> DIENG, "STATEMENT BY ADAMA DIENG..."



impact on other states, what the U.S. deems acceptable or unacceptable can set a precedent for the rest of the world. This is why the 2016 elections, particularly the election of President Donald Trump, and actions following it have gained the attention of other world leaders and citizens and can have a dangerous effect on international diplomacy and aid. The United States contributes the most money to the United Nations; their contribution adds up to 22% of the entire budget, or about \$590 million in 2018.<sup>29</sup> With United Nations depending so heavily on the U.S. financially, it is important that this money remains a guaranteed contribution, and as of August 9, 2018, seven months past the February due date, the U.S. has yet to pay their bill.<sup>30</sup> Their failure to contribute to the budget yet, paired with Trump's anti-UN rhetoric, should be of great concern to the global community.

Aside from the financial concerns of Trump's presidency, another concern for the United Nations and its' member states is his blatant disregard for UN principles and policies. Trump's decision to pull the United States from the Human Rights Council (HRC) showcases to the world that upholding human rights outlined in the UDHR is not a priority for the U.S., thus paving the way for other countries to follow suit. While other countries may not pull out of the HRC directly, with the U.S. refusing to follow the UDHR, and without there being a proper enforcement method in place, there is nothing stopping other countries from disregarding the Declaration as well.

The message the U.S. is sending is not the only concern. Trump's policies, or lack thereof, have had a drastic impact on human rights within the U.S. itself. Under the current administration, infrastructure concerns have been ignored, leading to a lack of basic resources

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<sup>29</sup> "UN BUDGET 2018: WHO'S PAID THEIR DUES, WHO HASN'T," *THE TIMES OF INDIA* ONLINE, LAST MODIFIED FEB. 22, 2018, [HTTPS://TIMESOFINDIA.INDIATIMES.COM/WORLD/UN-BUDGET-WHICH-COUNTRIES-CONTRIBUTE-THE-MOST-AND-WHICH-HAVE-PAID-THE-DUES-FOR-2018/ARTICLESHOW/63025919.CMS](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/un-budget-which-countries-contribute-the-most-and-which-have-paid-the-dues-for-2018/articleshow/63025919.cms).

<sup>30</sup> "CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED FOR 2018 FOR THE UNITED NATIONS REGULAR BUDGET," THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/EN/GA/CONTRIBUTIONS/HONOURROLL.SHTML](http://www.un.org/en/ga/contributions/honourroll.shtml).

such as clean water in some places like Flint, Michigan, and even electricity in others. Most pressing, Trump's refusal to acknowledge and send aid to the ongoing crisis in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria in September 2017 has led to the deaths of an estimated 1,427 American citizens as of August 9, 2018, and the number will only rise unless action is taken.<sup>31</sup> These deaths are due to the fact that Puerto Rico is still without power almost a year later, leading to a lack of resources and access to hospitals, and deaths primarily due to complications with diabetes and sepsis.<sup>32</sup> Puerto Ricans have been considered U.S. citizens since 1917, and are afforded almost all of the same rights as those living in a U.S. state, save a few, such as a vote in Congress.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the government has an obligation to provide proper assistance to the ongoing crisis, just as they would to a U.S. state in need. However, as is evident by the number of needless deaths and a lack of overall assistance an entire year later, the U.S. has not been meeting such obligations.

The crisis in Puerto Rico is just one example of the Trump administration's shortcomings. While the United States and its' ongoing issues is not nearly as much of a priority as other world crises, it is not something the world should take lightly. The U.S.'s sphere of influence is far-reaching, and a threat to American democracy can be a threat to the United Nations and global security as a whole.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are several crises worldwide that need to be addressed, though some go more unnoticed than others. The crisis in Venezuela is due to political unrest, inhumane

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<sup>31</sup> FRANCES ROBLES, "PUERTO RICAN GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGES HURRICANE DEATH TOLL OF 1,427," *THE NEW YORK TIMES* ONLINE, AUG. 9, 2018, [HTTPS://WWW.NYTIMES.COM/2018/08/09/US/PUERTO-RICO-DEATH-TOLL-MARIA.HTML](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/09/us/puerto-rico-death-toll-maria.html).

<sup>32</sup> ROBLES, "PUERTO RICAN GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGES HURRICANE DEATH TOLL OF 1,427."

<sup>33</sup> TIM WEBBER, "WHAT DOES BEING A U.S. TERRITORY MEAN FOR PUERTO RICO?" *NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO* ONLINE, OCT. 13, 2017, [HTTPS://WWW.NPR.ORG/2017/10/13/557500279/WHAT-DOES-BEING-A-U-S-TERRITORY-MEAN-FOR-PUERTO-RICO](https://www.npr.org/2017/10/13/557500279/what-does-being-a-u-s-territory-mean-for-puerto-rico).

treatment of Venezuelan citizens, and a lack of basic resources thanks to an extremely high inflation rate. Because of this, thousands have fled to neighboring countries, putting pressure and strain on those governments to support a growing refugee crisis. In the Eastern hemisphere, religious persecution and systemic violence has caused thousands of Rohingya Muslims to leave Myanmar for a safer life in countries such as Bangladesh. While many hope to return home, with a government that continues to lie and refuses to accept responsibility, this seems unlikely to happen anytime soon. In the United States, growing unrest and a president that is openly against the United Nations threatens the global status quo. Because the U.S. finances 22% of the UN and holds a great influence over other member states, it is important that the global community keeps a close eye on relations both internally and externally. Nonetheless, all crises are important and worth discussing within the United Nations to ensure that every human is afforded their inalienable human rights.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What countries in crises does your country have a particular interest in?

1. What kind of crisis might be taking place within your own country?
2. How do these crises (Venezuela, Myanmar, the U.S.) affect your country, either directly or indirectly?
3. What kind of actions has your country taken to provide assistance or relief to these crises in the past?

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# THE INTERSECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, SECURITY, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ISSUES BOOK  
ALYSSA EDMOND - HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY

*“The United Nations is founded on three mutually reinforcing pillars: peace and security, development, and human rights.”<sup>1</sup>*

The intersection of security, development, and human rights is essential to the success of the United Nations (UN). In order to thrive, countries must learn how to control this balance and their interconnecting attributes. While some states are able to find a harmony on their own, the United Nations often takes steps to create a universal starting line. The General Assembly created The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. In this seminal document, thirty human rights are established, as well as the international community’s duty to uphold and defend said rights.<sup>2</sup> In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), successor to the Millennium Development Goals. The SDGs set forth the UN’s agenda. The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) has said that “human rights are essential to achieving sustainable development.”<sup>3</sup> In underdeveloped countries in the grip of civil conflict, violence undercuts sustainable development and human rights. The quest for immediate physical security becomes the overriding priority. Yet death can occur from starvation or sexual assault as well as from a bullet or bomb. The connection between security, human rights, and sustainable development is thus undeniably important. In the context of deteriorating security and unsustainable development, human rights tend to be trampled on or ignored altogether.

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<sup>1</sup> UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER OF HUMAN RIGHTS. (2016). THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE [HTTPS://WWW.OHCHR.ORG/DOCUMENTS/ISSUES/RTD/INFONOTE\\_PEACE.PDF](https://www.ohchr.org/documents/issues/RTD/INFONOTE_PEACE.PDF).

<sup>2</sup> UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY. (1948). THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

<sup>3</sup> OHCHR | SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND HUMAN RIGHTS. (N.D.). RETRIEVED AUGUST 4, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.OHCHR.ORG/EN/ISSUES/MDG/PAGES/THE2030AGENDA.ASPX](https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/mdg/pages/the2030agenda.aspx).



When human rights are not upheld, not only do people suffer, the state suffers as well. The following cases highlight the challenges and problems at hand.

## THE CRISIS IN YEMEN

Currently, Yemen is struggling mightily to balance the need for human rights, security, and sustainable development. Since 2015, Yemen has been in the throes of a bitter civil war between the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, which includes the United States and Yemeni President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, and the Houthis, supported by Iran and former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. With the Hadi government unable to govern, the country is now sacrificing human rights, opting instead to have more security than ever. Houthi forces have attacked residential areas, in Ta'iz for example, while the Saudi coalition has repeatedly bombed civilian infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> On December 4, 2017, Houthis killed Saleh while consolidating control over the capital city of Sana'a, which escalated the war. The continued violence created a "political and security vacuum."<sup>5</sup> President Hadi's government now officially controls Lahj, Aden, and other parts of southern Yemen, while the Houthis control larger parts of the country, including Sana'a. As of April 2018, 75% of the population required humanitarian assistance and poverty levels had risen above 80%.<sup>6</sup> In the month of October 2018 alone, more than 8,000 households from Al-Hudaydah have been displaced<sup>7</sup>. After more than three years of violence, a poor economy, and little security, diminishing human rights remain prevalent in Yemen.

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<sup>4</sup> YEMEN 2017/2018. (N.D.). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.AMNESTY.ORG/EN/COUNTRIES/MIDDLE-EAST-AND-NORTH-AFRICA/YEMEN/REPORT-YEMEN/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/yemen/report-yemen/).

<sup>5</sup> YEMEN 2017/2018. (N.D.).

<sup>6</sup> OVERVIEW. (2018, APRIL 16). RETRIEVED JULY 25, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.WORLDBANK.ORG/EN/COUNTRY/YEMEN/OVERVIEW](https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/overview).

<sup>7</sup> "YEMEN UNHCR UPDATE, 21 SEPTEMBER – 12 OCTOBER 2018 - YEMEN." RELIEFWEB. ACCESSED OCTOBER 12, 2018. [HTTPS://RELIEFWEB.INT/REPORT/YEMEN/YEMEN-UNHCR-UPDATE-21-SEPTEMBER-12-OCTOBER-2018](https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-unhcr-update-21-september-12-october-2018).

In a Human Rights Council (HRC) mandated report, the OHCHR found that between March 2015 and August 30, 2017, at least 5,144 civilians had been killed and 8,749 injured.<sup>8</sup> What continues to make the Yemeni Civil War so destructive are the human rights violations committed by both sides. Both have targeted hospitals, schools, and residential areas,<sup>9</sup> considered war crimes under Article 8 of the Rome Statute.<sup>10</sup> Each side relied on shelling, air strikes, and other restricted weapons. While 22.2 million people are in need of humanitarian aid,<sup>11</sup> making Yemen the worst humanitarian disaster in the world, the Saudi-led coalition announced a plan for the Yemen Comprehensive Humanitarian Operations (YCHO). Despite its name, critics thought it a thinly veiled war tactic.<sup>12</sup> The plan agrees to open more ports and enlarge others for humanitarian aid, at the expense of Red Sea ports in exchange. The YCHO also casts doubt upon the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM), which created a routine inspection for all commercial ships entering Yemeni ports.<sup>13</sup> While the Yemeni civil war rages on, the UN is desperately trying to get humanitarian aid to the millions who need it, while both influential forces in Yemen actively work against them in the name of security and sustainable development.

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<sup>8</sup> OHCHR | YEMEN: AN "ENTIRELY MAN-MADE CATASTROPHE" – UN HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT URGES INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATION. (N.D.). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.OHCHR.ORG/EN/NEWSEVENTS/PAGES/DISPLAYNEWS.ASPX?NEWSID=22025&LANGID=E](https://www.ohchr.org/en/newsevents/pages/displaynews.aspx?newsid=22025&langid=E).

<sup>9</sup> YEMEN 2017/2018. (N.D.). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.AMNESTY.ORG/EN/COUNTRIES/MIDDLE-EAST-AND-NORTH-AFRICA/YEMEN/REPORT-YEMEN/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/yemen/report-yemen/).

<sup>10</sup> INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT. (2002). ROME STATUTE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT [HTTPS://WWW.ICC-CPI.INT/RESOURCE-LIBRARY/DOCUMENTS/RS-ENG.PDF](https://www.icc-cpi.int/resource-library/documents/rs-eng.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL. (2018). S/PRST/2018/5 [HTTPS://WWW.SECURITYCOUNCILREPORT.ORG/ATF/CF/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S\\_PRST\\_2018\\_5.PDF](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_PRST_2018_5.PDF).

<sup>12</sup> YEMEN: SAUDI "AID" PLAN IS WAR TACTIC. (2018, FEBRUARY 22). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.RESCUE.ORG/PRESS-RELEASE/YEMEN-SAUDI-AID-PLAN-WAR-TACTIC](https://www.rescue.org/press-release/yemen-saudi-aid-plan-war-tactic).

<sup>13</sup> UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL. (2015). S/RES/2216 [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/EN/GA/SEARCH/VIEW\\_DOC.ASP?SYMBOL=S/RES/2216%282015%29](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2216%282015%29).

## THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

Another example of the clash that can occur between sustainable development, human rights, and security can be found in Syria. In 2011, the Syrian government responded to peaceful pro-democracy protests with extreme violence. Many protesters were killed, or arbitrarily arrested and then tortured.<sup>14</sup> Since the start of the civil war, which evolved into a brutal regional war that drew in Turkey, Iran, Hezbollah, the Islamic State, Russia, and the United States, Syrians have lived in constant fear of speaking against their own government, which has repeatedly violated their human rights. In April 2015, Syrian forces launched an unsuccessful, large-scale military siege in Daara, which continued for 11 days in an attempt to restore security.<sup>15</sup> Due to the continuing violence, Syria's economy has declined. The World Bank claims that the lack of health care access, housing, education, and food has exacerbated conflict.<sup>16</sup> With Syria unable to solve its issues, the UN has attempted to assist the fractured state. As of October 2018, the province of Idlib is the only large area under control of rebel forces. The war seems to be reaching a close, as Russia and Turkey have created a demilitarization zone around Idlib and an order to withdraw weapons has been given.<sup>17</sup> This call for demilitarization could lead to the end of the civil war, or it could lead to more death and destruction for Syrian civilians.

In 2012, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed its initial Syria resolution, S/RES/2042. It called for action in many ways, including a call upon all parties to “cease all armed violence in all forms” and “to authorize an advance team of up to 30 unarmed military

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<sup>14</sup> “WE’VE NEVER SEEN SUCH HORROR” | CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY BY SYRIAN SECURITY FORCES. (2015, APRIL 29). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.HRW.ORG/REPORT/2011/06/01/WEVE-NEVER-SEEN-SUCH-HORROR/CRIMES-AGAINST-HUMANITY-SYRIAN-SECURITY-FORCES](https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/06/01/weve-never-seen-such-horror/crimes-against-humanity-syrian-security-forces)

<sup>15</sup> “WE’VE NEVER SEEN SUCH HORROR”

<sup>16</sup> SYRIA OVERVIEW. (N.D.). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.WORLDBANK.ORG/EN/COUNTRY/SYRIA/OVERVIEW](https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/syria/overview)

<sup>17</sup> BOWEN, JEREMY. “SENSE OF AN ENDING FOR SYRIA’S WAR ON IDLIB FRONT LINE.” BBC NEWS. OCTOBER 09, 2018. ACCESSED OCTOBER 12, 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.BBC.COM/NEWS/WORLD-MIDDLE-EAST-45796263](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-45796263).

observers to liaise with the parties and to begin to report on the implementation.”<sup>18</sup> More recently, however, the HRC has publicly condemned the human rights infractions and removal of humanitarian aid<sup>19</sup>. Despite the very public distaste that the Syrian civil war has created, in S/RES/2401 the UNSC called for a 30-day ceasefire so that humanitarian aid could be delivered<sup>20</sup>. While the United Nations tried to aid the conflict, its attempts came up short. Despite this resolution passing, no ceasefire occurred and Syria did not allow the delivery of life-saving medical attention to its own citizens<sup>21</sup>. Syria is continuing to struggle with finding harmony between security, human rights, and sustainable development, while the lives and well being of Syrians hang in the balance.

## THE PLIGHT OF REFUGEES

By both necessity and force, a large group of Syrian and Yemeni citizens finds themselves refugees as a result of the Yemeni and Syrian wars. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 5.6 million people have fled Syria<sup>22</sup> and over 260,000 people have left Yemen<sup>23</sup>. The trek to safety that these refugees endure is inhumane, dangerous, and often lethal. One story of this travel comes from a sixteen-year-old girl who led her siblings out of Syria after her father, mother, and sister were killed in three separate attacks. Family survivors left the rubble of their home with nothing more than the clothes on their back, a

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<sup>18</sup>“S/RES/2042”. UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL, 14 APRIL 2012, ACCESSED 25 JULY 2018, [HTTPS://UNDOCS.ORG/S/RES/2042\(2012\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2042(2012))

<sup>19</sup> “A/HRC/38/L.20”. UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL, 2 JULY 2018, ACCESSED 19 JULY 2018, [HTTP://UNDOCS.ORG/A/HRC/38/L.20](http://undocs.org/A/HRC/38/L.20)

<sup>20</sup> “S/RES/2401”. UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL, 24 FEBRUARY 2018, ACCESSED 25 JULY 2018, [HTTPS://UNDOCS.ORG/S/RES/2401\(2018\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2401(2018))

<sup>21</sup> BRIEFING SECURITY COUNCIL ON SYRIA CEASEFIRE RESOLUTION, SECRETARY-GENERAL SAYS HUMANITARIAN CONVOYS REMAIN UNABLE TO SAFELY ENTER EASTERN GHOUTA | MEETINGS COVERAGE AND PRESS RELEASES. (2018, MARCH 12). RETRIEVED JULY 25, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UN.ORG/PRESS/EN/2018/SC13244.DOC.HTM](https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/SC13244.DOC.HTM)

<sup>22</sup> UNITED NATIONS. (N.D.). SYRIA EMERGENCY. RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 18, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.UNHCR.ORG/EN-US/SYRIA-EMERGENCY.HTML](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html)

<sup>23</sup> YEMEN SITUATION REGIONAL REFUGEE AND MIGRANT RESPONSE PLAN. (N.D.). RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 18, 2018, FROM [HTTP://REPORTING.UNHCR.ORG/NODE/9982](http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/9982)

family picture, and a piece of clothing that reminded them of their lost loved ones<sup>24</sup>. After a long journey through the desert, the young head of family succeeded in saving her brothers and herself by reaching the berm, which she described as looking “like half of Syria was there” in tents<sup>25</sup>. The escape from Yemen is no easier feat. One refugee described his travel to the east coast of Africa. The first obstacle in escaping Yemen is that the Houthis are currently blocking the land bridge to Saudi Arabia. The forced trip over the Gulf of Aden can be costly. For this particular refugee, he paid \$300 to ride on a cargo ship and was shot at while boarding<sup>26</sup>. His ship was lucky, however, as a similar ship that left earlier in the week was attacked and sunk for attempting to escape Yemen.

Sadly, the struggles of being a refugee do not end when one reaches “safety.” Often, refugees escape awful conditions only to reach a new country with its own internal human rights issues. A large number of Syrian refugees find themselves in Lebanon or Jordan. In Jordan, most refugees live in refugee camps, and in Lebanon, they live in informal refugee camps in cities and towns. The refugee crisis has hit Lebanon and Jordan extremely hard and is stressing their balance of security, sustainable development, and human rights. The increase in population is putting a strain on what are already limited resources and is increasing poverty in the host countries<sup>27</sup>. The living conditions in these Syrian refugee camps are better than the war-torn rubble survivors left behind, but still not sufficient. Several refugees have developed medical

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<sup>24</sup> A SYRIAN TEENAGER DESCRIBES HER ESCAPE FROM WAR-TORN ALEPPO. (2016, OCTOBER 11). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.RESCUE.ORG/ARTICLE/SYRIAN-TEENAGER-DESCRIBES-HER-ESCAPE-WAR-TORN-ALEPPO](https://www.rescue.org/article/syrian-teenager-describes-her-escape-war-torn-aleppo)

<sup>25</sup> A SYRIAN TEENAGER DESCRIBES HER ESCAPE FROM WAR-TORN ALEPPO. (2016, OCTOBER 11). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.RESCUE.ORG/ARTICLE/SYRIAN-TEENAGER-DESCRIBES-HER-ESCAPE-WAR-TORN-ALEPPO](https://www.rescue.org/article/syrian-teenager-describes-her-escape-war-torn-aleppo)

<sup>26</sup> WARNER, G. (2015, MAY 08). IN HARD-TO-FLEE YEMEN, THOSE ESCAPING ARE NOT TYPICAL REFUGEES. RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 18, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.NPR.ORG/SECTIONS/PARALLELS/2015/05/08/405125442/IN-HARD-TO-FLEE-YEMEN-THOSE-ESCAPING-ARE-NOT-TYPICAL-REFUGEES](https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/05/08/405125442/in-hard-to-flee-yemen-those-escaping-are-not-typical-refugees)

<sup>27</sup> AN INTERNATIONAL FAILURE: THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS. (N.D.). RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 19, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.AMNESTY.ORG/EN/DOCUMENTS/ACT34/001/2013/EN/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT34/001/2013/en/)

conditions, such as asthma, from their time in the camps<sup>28</sup>. Host countries have also begun to tighten security at their borders, often declining refuge to Palestinian and Iraqi refugees from Syria<sup>29</sup>. Those affected by the Yemeni Civil War are often in similar situations. Yemeni refugees find themselves fleeing to countries in the Horn of Africa or Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, refugees struggle to enter after reaching the border, as the Saudi government has recently received criticism for its “open border” policy and is thus tightening its security<sup>30</sup>. Countries that would be able to economically sustain refugees in North America and Europe have chosen to focus on their security, by closing borders to the now displaced peoples. The tightening of borders to refugees is prevalent specifically in the European Union and the United States. Refugees who attempt to enter EU countries via Greece have to wait until their applications for asylum are processed. Applications are often denied, and the EU forged a deal with Turkey to accept deportations of refugees from Greece.<sup>31</sup> The United States highly values its border security and the vetting process for refugees is extremely extensive, taking as long as two years for resettlement approval<sup>32</sup>. In early 2017, President Donald J. Trump signed Executive Order 13769. This so-called travel ban targeted refugees from seven countries (including Yemen and Syria), making it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to enter the country under asylum<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> A SYRIAN FAMILY'S OVERWHELMING STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE IN ZAATARI CAMP. (2017, MAY 16). RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 19, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.RESCUE.ORG/ARTICLE/SYRIAN-FAMILY-S-OVERWHELMING-STRUGGLE-SURVIVE-ZAATARI-CAMP](https://www.rescue.org/article/syrian-family-s-overwhelming-struggle-survive-zaatari-camp)

<sup>29</sup> AN INTERNATIONAL FAILURE: THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS. (N.D.). RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 19, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.AMNESTY.ORG/EN/DOCUMENTS/ACT34/001/2013/EN/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT34/001/2013/en/)

<sup>30</sup> 10 IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT REFUGEES IN SAUDI ARABIA. (2017, JUNE 14). RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 20, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://BORGENPROJECT.ORG/REFUGEES-IN-SAUDI-ARABIA/](https://borgenproject.org/refugees-in-saudi-arabia/)

<sup>31</sup> KAKISSIS, J. (2018, MARCH 09). 'EUROPE DOES NOT SEE US AS HUMAN': STRANDED REFUGEES STRUGGLE IN GREECE. RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 20, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.NPR.ORG/SECTIONS/PARALLELS/2018/03/09/589973165/EUROPE-DOES-NOT-SEE-US-AS-HUMAN-STRANDED-REFUGEES-STRUGGLE-IN-GREECE](https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/03/09/589973165/europe-does-not-see-us-as-human-stranded-refugees-struggle-in-greece)

<sup>32</sup> REFUGEES IN AMERICA | USA FOR UNHCR. (N.D.). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNREFUGEES.ORG/REFUGEE-FACTS/USA/](https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/usa/)

<sup>33</sup> EXEC. ORDER NO 13769, 3 C.F.R. (2017). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.WHITEHOUSE.GOV/PRESIDENTIAL-ACTIONS/EXECUTIVE-ORDER-PROTECTING-NATION-FOREIGN-TERRORIST-ENTRY-UNITED-STATES/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states/)

Although life within Syria and Yemen remains harrowing and distressing, sadly it rarely improves for refugees from those shattered and devastated countries.

## CONCLUSION

Since its foundation, the United Nations has seen human rights, security, and sustainable development perpetually connected. The UN has taken it upon itself to promote balance between the three and has done so via many different avenues. The General Assembly, Security Council, and Human Rights Council have all addressed this daunting challenge in general terms or on a case-by-case basis. The Yemeni and Syrian civil wars show how dangerous and revolting the lives of citizens can become when human rights are neglected in an attempt to boost security and/or sustainable development. In both cases, however, the attempt to improve the latter two at the expense of human rights has led to calamity. Without respect for human rights, countries struggle to maintain both security and sustainable development. As the world watches Yemen and Syria continue to implode, how should the international community intervene? What can be done when governments oppose assistance to their citizens?

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Has your country ever struggled with the intersection of human rights, security, and sustainable development? If so, how did you cope?
2. What has your country done, or is doing, to aid countries at war that must balance human rights, security, and sustainable development?
3. Does your country believe that the United Nations should be more or less active in helping countries that are struggling? How should the UN approach states that do not want assistance?
4. What is your country's refugee policy? Does it value human rights?
5. What can be done when P-5 countries veto, or threaten to veto, an R2P intervention that could end, or at least alleviate, the immense pain and suffering of millions of ordinary people?
6. Does the need for employment and job security, which can result in harmful living environments, undermine sustainable development and human rights in developed as well as developing countries?



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# UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

## 69TH SESSION ISSUES BOOK

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INCREASING ENERGY ACCESS TO CLOSE THE ENERGY GAP

ENHANCING NATIONAL CAPACITIES FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL ONE BY 2030



MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST  
69TH SESSION



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## 69TH ANNUAL SESSION

### OUR COMMON HUMANITY: BACK TO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE UN CHARTER

UNDP LEADS THE UN'S GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK. WITH ACTIVITIES IN NEARLY 170 COUNTRIES, IT WORKS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD HELPING COUNTRIES ACHIEVE THEIR DEVELOPMENT GOALS. UNDP'S MANDATE IS TO WORK WITH COUNTRIES TO REDUCE POVERTY, PROMOTE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE, PREVENT AND RECOVER FROM CRISES, PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE. IT SEEKS TO ENSURE THAT COUNTRIES HAVE ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND KNOWLEDGE TO MEET THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS. UNDP'S AGSHIP PUBLICATION IS THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT, WHICH FOCUSES ON KEY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AND PROVIDES MEASUREMENT TOOLS, INNOVATIVE ANALYSIS AND POLICY PROPOSALS.

UNDP HAS A 36-MEMBER EXECUTIVE BOARD, WHOSE MEMBERS ARE ELECTED BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL, WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING INTER-GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT TO AND SUPERVISION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF UNDP IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OVERALL POLICY GUIDANCE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ECOSOC, AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES SET OUT IN THE UN CHARTER. IT MUST ALSO BE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF PROGRAMME COUNTRIES. THE BOARD IS UNDER ECOSOC'S AUTHORITY, AND ITS FUNCTIONS ARE SET OUT IN GA RES. 48/162 (1993).  
(UN HANDBOOK, 2017-18)

THE UNDP EXECUTIVE BOARD ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF MIRIAM COLLEGE FOR THE 69TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

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## INCREASING ENERGY ACCESS TO CLOSE THE ENERGY GAP

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
UNDP EXECUTIVE BOARD ISSUES BOOK  
CARYL LOUISE ANNE BILLONES – MIRIAM COLLEGE

Energy is a necessity in human life, social and economic progress, society and the economy. It is an essential tool in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable energy delivers sustainable development,<sup>1</sup> without which other commitments will remain unfulfilled.<sup>2</sup> The proportion of the global population with access to electricity steadily increased from 79 per cent in 2000 to 85 per cent in 2012.<sup>3</sup> The proportion of the global population with access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking, such as gas and electricity, also increased from 54 per cent to 58 per cent between 2005 to 2014.<sup>4</sup> But, the slow-paced development and progress on sustainable energy is not closing the energy gap enough in some regions. Billions of people worldwide still live without electricity, particularly those living in sub-Saharan Africa. An estimated three billion people still depend on unhealthy fuels, such as charcoal, wood and animal dung, to warm their homes and cook their food. Fumes from these solid fuels can cause severe health problems, not just household pollution. Globally, more than four million people die each year from illness caused by solid fuel indoor pollution. The ones most affected by the repercussions of the energy-gap are poor men, women and children who do not have access to clean energy.

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 7.  
[HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/DAM/UNDP/LIBRARY/CLIMATE%20AND%20DISASTER%20RESILIENCE/7%20CLEAN%20ENERGY-FEB%202017.PDF](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/climate%20and%20disaster%20resilience/7%20clean%20energy-feb%202017.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> UNDP SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 7.  
[HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/DAM/UNDP/LIBRARY/CLIMATE%20AND%20DISASTER%20RESILIENCE/7%20CLEAN%20ENERGY-FEB%202017.PDF](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/climate%20and%20disaster%20resilience/7%20clean%20energy-feb%202017.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> GOAL 7: ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL.  
[HTTPS://UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/REPORT/2016/GOAL-07/](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/goal-07/)

<sup>4</sup> GOAL 7: ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL.  
[HTTPS://UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/REPORT/2016/GOAL-07/](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/goal-07/)

Successfully attaining the objective of clean and sustainable energy positively impacts the lives of millions of people. As population and urbanization continues to grow, the demand for affordable and sustainable energy also continues to rise. Overall, the world's electricity demand is projected to grow by more than 70 per cent by 2040.<sup>5</sup> Today, the number of people living in cities makes up about 50 per cent of the total global population and about 70 per cent of the global carbon dioxide emissions comes from the urban areas. The rise of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emission with its negative effects on the environment and the climate, makes urban areas even vulnerable to intense and severe weather events, such as tropical cyclones, summer heat waves, floods and wildfires.

## UNITED NATIONS ACTION

In 2009, the United Nation's Secretary General established the Advisory Group on Energy and Climate Change (AGECC) to help find solutions that address sustainable and renewable energy. AGECC is a prime example of a multi-stakeholder partnership bringing together the UN System, including the World Bank, with the private sector and research institutions.<sup>6</sup> AGECC calls on the UN System and its Member States to support the goals of ensuring universal access to modern energy services and reducing energy intensity by 40 per cent by 2030.<sup>7</sup> The AGECC also leads in the global campaign to raise awareness on energy-related developments.

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<sup>5</sup> UNDP SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 7. [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/DAM/UNDP/LIBRARY/CLIMATE%20AND%20DISASTER%20RESILIENCE/7%20CLEAN%20ENERGY-FEB%202017.PDF](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/climate%20and%20disaster%20resilience/7%20clean%20energy-feb%202017.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> ENERGY FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S ADVISORY GROUP ON ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AGECC). [HTTPS://WWW.UNIDO.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/2010-05/AGECCSUMMARYREPORT\\_0.PDF](https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2010-05/AGECCSUMMARYREPORT_0.PDF)

<sup>7</sup> UNITED NATIONS, GENERAL ASSEMBLY, PROMOTION OF NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY, A/66/100 (15 AUGUST 2011), AVAILABLE FROM: [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/ESA/DSD/RESOURCES/RES\\_PDFS/GA-66/SG%20REPORT\\_PROMOTION\\_NEW\\_RENEWABLE\\_ENERGY.PDF](http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_pdfs/GA-66/SG%20REPORT_PROMOTION_NEW_RENEWABLE_ENERGY.PDF)

Since sustainable energy is a crucial part in economic growth, the Secretary-General also launched the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative in 2011.<sup>8</sup> It is a multi-stakeholder partnership between governments, the private sector, and civil society<sup>9</sup> and has three primary objectives, namely, (1) ensuring universal access to modern energy services; (2) doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency; and (3) doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.<sup>10</sup> The SE4ALL serves as an avenue for the United Nations and not-for-profit organizations to work together to achieve sustainable and renewable energy. The Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Sustainable Energy for All, administered by UNDP, supports relevant activities of the UN System, including those undertaken by the Special Representative with support from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through extrabudgetary resources.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, the resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1) highlights the actions that Member States have to undertake to implement the new agenda. The resolution enumerates the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their associated 169 targets.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the main coordinator of the United Nations on the transformation and development of the energy systems. UNDP helps countries transition away from the use of finite fossil fuels and towards clean and sustainable

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<sup>8</sup> UNITED NATIONS, REPORT OF SECRETARY-GENERAL, UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR ALL, A/70/422 (14 OCTOBER 2015), AVAILABLE FROM: [HTTPS://SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPMENT.UN.ORG/CONTENT/DOCUMENTS/8533SG%20REPORT\\_UN%20DECADE%20OF%20SUSTAINABLE%20ENERGY%20FOR%20ALL-ADVANCE.PDF](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/8533SG%20REPORT_UN%20DECADE%20OF%20SUSTAINABLE%20ENERGY%20FOR%20ALL-ADVANCE.PDF)

<sup>9</sup> SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR ALL: AN OVERVIEW. [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/MILLENNIUMGOALS/PDF/SEFA.PDF](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/SEFA.PDF)

<sup>10</sup> SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR ALL. MISSION. LAST MODIFIED JULY 2018. [HTTPS://WWW.SEFORALL.ORG/MISSION](https://www.seforall.org/mission)

<sup>11</sup> UNITED NATIONS, REPORT OF SECRETARY-GENERAL, UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR ALL, A/70/422 (14 OCTOBER 2015), AVAILABLE FROM: [HTTPS://SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPMENT.UN.ORG/CONTENT/DOCUMENTS/8533SG%20REPORT\\_UN%20DECADE%20OF%20SUSTAINABLE%20ENERGY%20FOR%20ALL-ADVANCE.PDF](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/8533SG%20REPORT_UN%20DECADE%20OF%20SUSTAINABLE%20ENERGY%20FOR%20ALL-ADVANCE.PDF)



sources of energy.<sup>12</sup> The policy and programme of the UNDP on achieving sustainable energy is based on three intertwined action areas of Energy Access, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. With regards to these three areas, UNDP supports national governments through comprehensive technical assistance at the policy and institutional level, as well as, on-the-ground investments ranging from local community-level support to nationwide efforts.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the UNDP works to address challenges on the social, economic and environmental levels such as disparities in access to reliable energy services, including in conflict-affected and fragile settings; the lack of affordable and reliable energy services and energy's importance as a key input to job creation and economic growth; and the threat to the planet's ecological balance, biodiversity and climate.<sup>14</sup>

The energy related programmes of UNDP continues to grow as countries from around the world create policies, projects and programs aimed at intensifying their commitments to sustainable energy. In its support to countries, UNDP advocates for moving away from stand-alone technology and engineering interventions to comprehensive solutions where energy plays a key role in sustainable development and poverty eradication.<sup>15</sup>

A sector-wide energy transformation can be challenging to some countries, especially to developing countries. Most developing countries lack access to affordable financing for sustainable energy. There are high financing costs related to achieving SDG 7 and its targets. As a result, conventional energy (e.g. fossil fuels such as oil, gas and coal) are more competitive

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<sup>12</sup> UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME. "ANNUAL REPORT 2017: CLEAN, AFFORDABLE ENERGY." LAST MODIFIED JULY 2018. [HTTPS://ANNUALREPORT2017.UNDP.ORG/](https://annualreport2017.undp.org/)

<sup>13</sup> UNDP SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 7. [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/DAM/UNDP/LIBRARY/CLIMATE%20AND%20DISASTER%20RESILIENCE/7%20CLEAN%20ENERGY-FEB%202017.PDF](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/climate%20and%20disaster%20resilience/7%20clean%20energy-feb%202017.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> UNDP SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 7. [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/DAM/UNDP/LIBRARY/CLIMATE%20AND%20DISASTER%20RESILIENCE/7%20CLEAN%20ENERGY-FEB%202017.PDF](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/climate%20and%20disaster%20resilience/7%20clean%20energy-feb%202017.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> UNDP SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 7. [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/DAM/UNDP/LIBRARY/CLIMATE%20AND%20DISASTER%20RESILIENCE/7%20CLEAN%20ENERGY-FEB%202017.PDF](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/climate%20and%20disaster%20resilience/7%20clean%20energy-feb%202017.pdf)

compared to renewable energy projects. As such, the UNDP's market transformation approach seeks to assist governments to put in place packages of public instruments that systematically target these barriers and investment risks, with the aim of cost-effectively achieving risk-return profiles that attract investment in sustainable energy at scale.<sup>16</sup> Its objective is to generate low-cost financing for developing countries. Furthermore, UNDP seeks to identify ways where government and policy makers can improve investment's risk-return profile through reducing risk, transferring risk or compensating for risk.<sup>17</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTIONS

The need for an affordable and sustainable energy created an opportunity for international and regional organizations to initiate programmes and projects to advance the progress on renewable energy. Through these initiatives, organizations aim to encourage more public and private sector stakeholders to work towards closing the energy gap.

## INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY

International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is an intergovernmental organization that is similar to the UNDP. It focuses on helping countries transform their energy systems and continuously intensify sustainable energy. It promotes the widespread adoption and sustainable use of all forms of renewable energy, including bioenergy, geothermal, hydropower, ocean, solar and wind energy in the pursuit of sustainable development, energy access, energy security and

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<sup>16</sup> UNDP SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 7.  
[HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/DAM/UNDP/LIBRARY/CLIMATE%20AND%20DISASTER%20RESILIENCE/7%20CLEAN%20ENERGY-FEB%202017.PDF](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/climate%20and%20disaster%20resilience/7%20clean%20energy-feb%202017.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> UNDP SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 7.  
[HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/DAM/UNDP/LIBRARY/CLIMATE%20AND%20DISASTER%20RESILIENCE/7%20CLEAN%20ENERGY-FEB%202017.PDF](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/climate%20and%20disaster%20resilience/7%20clean%20energy-feb%202017.pdf)

low-carbon economic growth and prosperity.<sup>18</sup> Currently, more than 170 Member States actively work with IRENA.

IRENA created the “Global Energy Transformation: A Roadmap to 2050” (REmap) to address the need to increase renewable energy worldwide. This programme is in accordance with the 2015 Paris Agreement that aims to limit the average global temperature increase to below 2°C. REmap focuses on possible technology pathways and assesses numerous metrics (e.g. technology, sector and system costs, investment needs, externalities relating to air pollution and climate, carbon dioxide CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) and economic indicators, such as employment and economic growth, related to sustainable energy. Based on these country driven results, REmap provides insights to policy and decision makers for areas where action is needed.<sup>19</sup> According to the reports from the REmap programme, the current policies and plan on carbon dioxide CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have not yet hit its targets and could affect the budget on the energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions or “carbon budget”, which could be exhausted in less than 20 years. Limiting the global temperature increase to below 2°C is viable. However, the global energy system must undergo a profound transformation, replacing the present system that is largely based on fossil-fuels.<sup>20</sup> The REmap helps countries identify policies, assets and technologies that would be beneficial to increasing their renewable energy needs.

The current REmap report identifies six areas where policy and decision makers need to act<sup>21</sup> as follows:

Focus Area 1: Tap into the strong synergies between energy efficiency and renewable  
Focus Area 2: Plan a power system with high shares of renewable energy

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<sup>18</sup> INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY. “ABOUT IRENA.” LAST MODIFIED JULY 2018.  
[HTTP://WWW.IRENA.ORG/ABOUTIRENA](http://www.irena.org/aboutirena)

<sup>19</sup> INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY. “REMAP – RENEWABLE ENERGY ROADMAPS.” LAST MODIFIED JUNE 2018.  
[HTTP://WWW.IRENA.ORG/REMAP](http://www.irena.org/remap)

<sup>20</sup> INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY. “GLOBAL ENERGY TRANSFORMATION: A ROADMAP TO 2050.” LAST MODIFIED JUNE 2018. [HTTP://WWW.IRENA.ORG/PUBLICATIONS/2018/APR/GLOBAL-ENERGY-TRANSITION-A-ROADMAP-TO-2050](http://www.irena.org/publications/2018/APR/GLOBAL-ENERGY-TRANSITION-A-ROADMAP-TO-2050)

<sup>21</sup> INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY. “GLOBAL ENERGY TRANSFORMATION: A ROADMAP TO 2050.” LAST MODIFIED JUNE 2018. [HTTP://WWW.IRENA.ORG/PUBLICATIONS/2018/APR/GLOBAL-ENERGY-TRANSITION-A-ROADMAP-TO-2050](http://www.irena.org/publications/2018/APR/GLOBAL-ENERGY-TRANSITION-A-ROADMAP-TO-2050)

Focus Area 3: Increase the use of electricity in transport, buildings and industry  
Focus Area 4: Foster system-wide innovation  
Focus Area 5: Align socio-economic structures and investment with the transition  
Focus Area 6: Ensure that transition costs and benefits are fairly distributed<sup>22</sup>

These focus areas will help the governments and policy makers identify the strategic plan and strategy management to foster global energy transformation essential for sustainable development.

## THE 1 GIGATON COALITION

The 1 Gigaton Coalition is a voluntary international framework initiated and supported by the Kingdom of Norway and coordinated by UN Environment to support countries that measure and report greenhouse gas emission savings resulting from renewable energy and energy efficiency activities and initiatives.<sup>23</sup> This framework was created to support the Paris Agreement in reducing the increase in global temperature and global greenhouse gas emissions. Based from its report findings, continuous support to countries for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects made a great impact on reducing the greenhouse gas emissions. Partnership programs have generated developments such as improved environmental and human health, economic stimulus and employment creation, enhanced gender equality, and other societal gains that support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> IRENA (2018), GLOBAL ENERGY TRANSFORMATION: A ROADMAP TO 2050, INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY, ABU DHABI. LAST MODIFIED JULY 2018. [HTTP://WWW.IRENA.ORG/-/MEDIA/FILES/IRENA/AGENCY/PUBLICATION/2018/APR/IRENA\\_REPORT\\_GET\\_2018.PDF](http://www.irena.org/-/media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Publication/2018/APR/IRENA_REPORT_GET_2018.PDF)

<sup>23</sup> UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME. "THE EMISSIONS GAP REPORT 2017 AND THE 1 GIGATON COALITION REPORT." LAST MODIFIED JUNE 2018. [HTTP://WWW.UNEPFI.ORG/NEWS/THEMES/CLIMATE-CHANGE/THE-EMISSIONS-GAP-REPORT-2017-AND-THE-1-GIGATON-COALITION-REPORT/](http://www.unepfi.org/news/themes/climate-change/the-emissions-gap-report-2017-and-the-1-gigaton-coalition-report/)

<sup>24</sup> UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (2017). "RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: CONTRIBUTIONS TO REDUCING GLOBAL EMISSIONS." LAST MODIFIED JUNE 2018. [HTTPS://WEDOCS.UNEP.ORG/BITSTREAM/HANDLE/20.500.11822/22149/1\\_1\\_GIGATON\\_THIRD%20REPORT\\_EN.PDF?SEQUENCE=1&ISALOWED=Y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22149/1_1_GIGATON_THIRD%20REPORT_EN.PDF?sequence=1&isalowed=y)

## THE RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY NETWORK

The Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (REN21) is a multi-stakeholder network that is built on an international community of over 900 experts from governments, inter-governmental organisations, industry associations, non-governmental organisations, and science and academia.<sup>25</sup> It assists on creating policies that build on the advancement of renewable energy. Based on the recent status update of REN21, positive developments in the overall energy system were identified, including the following:

- The share of modern renewable energy in the total global energy supply is on the rise.
- Renewable electricity saw record global growth in solar PV and continued acceleration of wind power.
- Defying sceptics, higher shares of variable renewable energy (VRE) are being successfully integrated into electricity systems across the globe, without affecting grid stability.
- The costs of solar PV and wind continued to fall due to technological innovations, changes in markets, effective policies and new business models.
- New market players emerged as costs decreased, but traditional utilities also are changing their business models.
- Progress, albeit slow, continued towards increasing energy access in developing countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Pledges to phase out coal power are on the rise.<sup>26</sup>
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## CURRENT POLICY INADEQUACIES AND CHALLENGES

Regardless of the progress and development on renewable energy, if the current speed of the global energy transition continues, it will be difficult to accomplish the Paris Agreement and limit the average global temperature increase to below 2°C. REN21 identified weak energy intensity improvements, the slow progress in renewable energy uptake in heating and cooling

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<sup>25</sup> RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY NETWORK FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY. "ADVANCING THE GLOBAL RENEWABLE ENERGY TRANSITION." LAST MODIFIED JULY 2018. [HTTP://WWW.REN21.NET/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2018/06/GSR\\_2018\\_HIGHLIGHTS\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.ren21.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/GSR_2018_HIGHLIGHTS_FINAL.PDF)

<sup>26</sup> RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY NETWORK FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY. "ADVANCING THE GLOBAL RENEWABLE ENERGY TRANSITION." LAST MODIFIED JULY 2018. [HTTP://WWW.REN21.NET/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2018/06/GSR\\_2018\\_HIGHLIGHTS\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.ren21.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/GSR_2018_HIGHLIGHTS_FINAL.PDF)

and challenges related to the transport sector as key hindrances in major progress towards renewable and sustainable energy.<sup>27</sup>

There has been an improvement on the energy intensity or the amount of energy per unit of economic activity in the year 2017. But, compared to the progress made from the previous year, last year's improvement is lower and may affect the initiative to double the improvement rate of energy efficiency by 2030. Despite the urgent need for enabling policy to transform this sector, policy development appears to be a much lower priority for renewable heating and cooling than for renewable electricity.<sup>28</sup> Currently, millions of people still live without access to renewable energy technology. Millions of people continue to depend on unhealthy fuels to warm their homes and cook their food. Although there has been a rapid development on energy in the transportation sector, the industry continues to rely on oil rather than biofuels and electricity. The use of biofuels in transport is growing slowly – held back by continuing policy uncertainty stemming from debates about the sustainability of first-generation biofuels – and is still concentrated in a small number of countries and regions like the United States, Brazil, the European Union and China.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the biofuels produced in 2017 is quite small for it to be distributed.

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<sup>27</sup> RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY NETWORK FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY. "ADVANCING THE GLOBAL RENEWABLE ENERGY TRANSITION." LAST MODIFIED JULY 2018. [HTTP://WWW.REN21.NET/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2018/06/GSR\\_2018\\_HIGHLIGHTS\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.ren21.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/GSR_2018_HIGHLIGHTS_FINAL.PDF)

<sup>28</sup> RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY NETWORK FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY. "ADVANCING THE GLOBAL RENEWABLE ENERGY TRANSITION." LAST MODIFIED JULY 2018. [HTTP://WWW.REN21.NET/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2018/06/GSR\\_2018\\_HIGHLIGHTS\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.ren21.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/GSR_2018_HIGHLIGHTS_FINAL.PDF)

<sup>29</sup> RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY NETWORK FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY. "ADVANCING THE GLOBAL RENEWABLE ENERGY TRANSITION." LAST MODIFIED JULY 2018. [HTTP://WWW.REN21.NET/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2018/06/GSR\\_2018\\_HIGHLIGHTS\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.ren21.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/GSR_2018_HIGHLIGHTS_FINAL.PDF)

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

With the increase of energy service access, there has been a decrease on the energy gap between urban and rural areas, yet millions of people remains to have a lack of access to electrical power. More needs to be done to improve energy connectivity and investments need to be more affordable to meet the demands of sustainable energy. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) identified the following issues emerging around achieving SDG 7:

- Distributed generation and new electricity supply business models are and will keep on being a game changer for improving the quality of energy services.
- New energy storage systems and off-grid and smart-grid technologies can provide opportunities to substantially increase access to modern energy services in rural and remote areas.
- Fossil fuels will continue to dominate in an energy mix that is striving to meet the ever-increasing energy demand in Asia and the Pacific.
- Although energy efficiency continues to improve globally and regionally and despite significant advances, the progress needs further acceleration in order to contribute to the achievement of SDG 7.
- Enhanced regional energy connectivity provides new opportunities for integration of renewable energy sources to the utility grid.
- There may be advantages and benefits to enhancing cross-border energy trade as one of the means of implementation for the SDG 7 targets, as long as these initiatives take into account social and environmental impacts.<sup>30</sup>

Renewable and sustainable energy still remains limited to most of the developing countries. Currently, majority of the growth in the sustainable energy industry is in developed countries where renewable energy technologies (e.g. on-shore wind, geothermal, hydropower, solar power, biomass, etc.) are being created and developed. There is a need for a corresponding global strategy to support developing countries that lack access to electricity and are dependent on traditional solid fuels. It is clear that the world faces a critical and complex challenge on sustainable energy. The United Nations serves as an avenue for a greater cooperation among Member States to promote renewable sources of energy and close the energy gap by 2030.

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<sup>30</sup> UNITED NATIONS, ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (2017). "ASIA-PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS OUTLOOK." LAST MODIFIED JULY 2018.  
[HTTPS://WWW.ADB.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/PUBLICATION/232871/ASIA-PACIFIC-SDGOUTLOOK-2017.PDF](https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/232871/asia-pacific-sdgoutlook-2017.pdf)

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How can United Nations and Member States strengthen energy cooperation and energy security with other Member States?
2. What actions has your country taken to promote low-cost clean technologies?
3. What actions has your country undertaken to deal with greenhouse gas emission reduction as called for by the Paris Agreement?
4. What steps has your country undertaken or plan to take to meet the targets of Goal 7 of the Sustainable Development Goal?
5. How can your country promote environmental sustainability and support energy projects to other Member States?
6. How can the United Nations generate low-cost financing on renewable energy related programmes and projects for developing countries?



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# ENHANCING NATIONAL CAPACITIES FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
UNDP EXECUTIVE BOARD ISSUES BOOK  
MARIA BEATRIX BAKABAK – MIRIAM COLLEGE

Disasters come in the form of natural or technological (human-made) hazards that can lead to the loss of lives, destruction in properties and other social and economic damages. Disasters have also triggered the increase of vulnerability in social integration and the psychology and physiology men, women and children who are affected . Throughout history, the approach to these disasters has focused on immediate response.<sup>1</sup> With recognition by the end of the 20th century that not all disasters were caused by natural elements<sup>2</sup>, it was concluded that disasters can be managed through prevention of risks by reducing vulnerability and exposure.<sup>3</sup> The underlying causes of these risks were identified, some of which were poor economic and urban development practices, environmental degradation, poverty and inequality, and climate change.<sup>4</sup> Addressing these underlying risk drivers will reduce disaster risk, lessen the impacts of climate change and, consequently, maintain the sustainability of development.<sup>5</sup> Reflecting on the adverse effects of disasters and how it slows down development, Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon proclaimed that, “All investments in sustainable development should be risk-informed.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.PREVENTIONWEB.NET/RISK/DRR-DRM](https://www.preventionweb.net/risk/drr-drm)

<sup>2</sup> URBAN AND COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/UNDP/EN/HOME/CLIMATE-AND-DISASTER-RESILIENCE/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION/URBAN-AND-COMMUNITY-RISK-MANAGEMENT.HTML](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/climate-and-disaster-resilience/disaster-risk-reduction/urban-and-community-risk-management.html)

<sup>3</sup> URBAN AND COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/UNDP/EN/HOME/CLIMATE-AND-DISASTER-RESILIENCE/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION/URBAN-AND-COMMUNITY-RISK-MANAGEMENT.HTML](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/climate-and-disaster-resilience/disaster-risk-reduction/urban-and-community-risk-management.html)

<sup>4</sup> CASTRO, R. (2013). DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT. PRESENTATION, BAGUIO.

<sup>5</sup> WHAT IS DISASTER RISK REDUCTION?. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/WHO-WE-ARE/WHAT-IS-DRR](https://www.unisdr.org/who-we-are/what-is-drr)

<sup>6</sup> UNITED NATIONS, GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ONE HUMANITY, SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL, A/70/709 (21 JANUARY 2012), AVAILABLE FROM [UNISDR.ORG/FILES/RESOLUTIONS/N0149261.PDF](https://www.unisdr.org/files/resolutions/N0149261.pdf)

With disasters defined as the negative consequence of mismanaged risks, Member States are challenged to mitigate these risks at an early stage. It is important to know that disasters can be avoided when following a strategic action plan.

## NATURAL DISASTER AND HUMAN INDUCED DISASTER

There are two types of disasters. Natural disasters occur when a natural hazard affects humans and their natural habitat. These disasters have a huge impact on human lives when there is a lack in emergency management.<sup>7</sup> Some 90 per cent of these disasters are weather-related.<sup>8</sup> Resilience from these types of disasters depend on the population's capacity to either contribute or resist the disaster; thus, the importance of countering vulnerability with practical measures. Meanwhile, human-induced disasters are consequences of technological or human hazards.<sup>9</sup> Stampedes, industrial accidents, nuclear explosions/radiation, oil spills, and even terrorism, war and attacks are classified in this category.<sup>10</sup>

According to statistics from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), disasters have cost at least USD1.3 trillion within the last ten years.<sup>11</sup> In the same decade, the UNDP also reported over 1.5 billion deaths from various disasters worldwide. Fragile and developing countries are more often exposed to natural hazards, while climate change and weak governance are also underlying causes of disasters.

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<sup>7</sup> CASTRO, R. (2013). DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT. PRESENTATION, BAGUIO.

<sup>8</sup> WAHLSTRÖM, M. (2015). PARIS AGREEMENT SHOWS POLITICAL WILL TO REDUCE DISASTER RISK. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/ARCHIVE/47142](https://www.unisdr.org/archive/47142)

<sup>9</sup> CASTRO, R. (2013). DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT. PRESENTATION, BAGUIO.

<sup>10</sup> CASTRO, R. (2013). DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT. PRESENTATION, BAGUIO.

<sup>11</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.PREVENTIONWEB.NET/RISK/DRR-DRM](https://www.preventionweb.net/risk/drr-drm)

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Through Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), damages brought about by natural hazards are anticipated, then acted upon to reduce risk. It is the practice of reducing risks through systematic actions to analyze the drivers of disasters.<sup>12</sup> Actions that could best avoid these disasters include reducing exposure to hazards, lessening people and area vulnerability, proper management of the environment, strengthening efforts on preparation and early warning signals for adverse events.<sup>13</sup>

## UNITED NATIONS ACTION

In 1999, the United Nations established the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) with the General Assembly resolution (56/195), which facilitates the implementation of the International Strategy for Reduction (ISDR).<sup>14</sup> The ISDR aims to bring together Member States, multilateral organizations and other institutions to reduce the number of deaths and injuries caused by natural hazards.<sup>15</sup>

The United Nations General Assembly endorsed a framework in disaster risk reduction during the 2015 Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is the first major agreement after 2015, consisting of seven targets and four priorities for action.<sup>16</sup> It emphasizes that a State has the primary role in the actualization of the risk reduction and encourages States to make use of other stakeholders such as the private sector to fulfill all of its objectives by 2030. The Sendai Framework hopes to reduce global disaster mortality, reduce the number of affected people, reduce economic loss, reduce damages to infrastructure, increase in risk reduction strategies,

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<sup>12</sup> WHAT IS DISASTER RISK REDUCTION?. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/WHO-WE-ARE/WHAT-IS-DRR](https://www.unisdr.org/who-we-are/what-is-drr)

<sup>13</sup> WHAT IS DISASTER RISK REDUCTION?. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/WHO-WE-ARE/WHAT-IS-DRR](https://www.unisdr.org/who-we-are/what-is-drr)

<sup>14</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. UNISDR. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/FILES/46052\\_DISASTERRISKREDUCTIONIN THE2030AGEND.PDF](https://www.unisdr.org/files/46052_disasterriskreductioninthe2030agend.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> STOP DISASTERS-ISDR. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.STOPDISASTERSGAME.ORG/EN/ISDR.HTML](http://www.stopdisastersgame.org/en/isdr.html)

<sup>16</sup> SENDAI FRAMEWORK FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/WE/COORDINATE/SENDAI-FRAMEWORK](https://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework)

enhance international cooperation to developing countries, and increase the availability of early warning systems and disaster risk assessments.<sup>17</sup>

Climate change and disaster risks are correlated. Reducing the causes of climate change by removing emissions is a way of applying disaster risk reduction because it prevents new risks. The UNISDR is interlocked with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which highlights actions that takes into account the environment.<sup>18</sup> It pursues “nationally determined prioritized actions, taking into account vulnerable people, places and ecosystems” in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.<sup>19</sup> The integration of DRR on sustainable development and climate change prompted actions on follow-up processes that include the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and human rights committees for the promotion of an ‘enabling environment for coherent national action’.<sup>20</sup>

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supports the Sendai Framework and works with reducing greenhouse gases and zero-carbon development in the long run.<sup>21</sup> The UNDP’s efforts on climate change and disaster resilience are contained in the different global agreements such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the UNDP performs collaborative efforts with Member States to advance actions against climate change.

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<sup>17</sup> SENDAI FRAMEWORK FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/WE/COORDINATE/SENDAI-FRAMEWORK](https://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework)

<sup>18</sup> WAHLSTRÖM, M. (2015). PARIS AGREEMENT SHOWS POLITICAL WILL TO REDUCE DISASTER RISK. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/ARCHIVE/47142](https://www.unisdr.org/archive/47142)

<sup>19</sup> WAHLSTRÖM, M. (2015). PARIS AGREEMENT SHOWS POLITICAL WILL TO REDUCE DISASTER RISK. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/ARCHIVE/47142](https://www.unisdr.org/archive/47142)

<sup>20</sup> WAHLSTRÖM, M. (2015). PARIS AGREEMENT SHOWS POLITICAL WILL TO REDUCE DISASTER RISK. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/ARCHIVE/47142](https://www.unisdr.org/archive/47142)

<sup>21</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.PREVENTIONWEB.NET/RISK/DRR-DRM](https://www.preventionweb.net/risk/drr-drm)

<sup>22</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.PREVENTIONWEB.NET/RISK/DRR-DRM](https://www.preventionweb.net/risk/drr-drm)

The first action by the UNDP regarding DRR is the Actionable Risk Information, under the Sendai Framework.<sup>23</sup> 30 countries have created disaster loss databases while 60 more have established risk profiles via risk modelling and mapping, through the help of the UNDP.<sup>24</sup> Second is the UNDP's support under the second priority of the Sendai Framework, which is "Strengthening Risk Governance to Manage Disaster Risk".<sup>25</sup> In a span of 10 years, the UNDP has actualized risk governance in over 125 States by advancing legal frameworks, upholding policy and strategic development and mainstreaming DRR in development planning.<sup>26</sup> In line with the 4th Priority of the Sendai Framework, which is "Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response", the UNDP has provided 96 early warning preparedness projects.<sup>27</sup> These projects urge States to have an increase in coordination and multi-stakeholder participation. This also includes innovation and the use of technology to bridge national and local early warning systems to the more vulnerable communities.<sup>28</sup> Lastly, the UNDP fully supports Urban and Community Risk Management that is present in all priorities outlined in the Sendai Framework. The UNDP has provided local and urban risk management to more than 75 States. This includes knowledge, culture and capacity building on efforts towards managing and reducing risks for governments and communities.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> WHAT IS DISASTER RISK REDUCTION?. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/WHO-WE-ARE/WHAT-IS-DRR](https://www.unisdr.org/who-we-are/what-is-drr)

<sup>24</sup> ACTIONABLE RISK INFORMATION. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/UNDP/EN/HOME/CLIMATE-AND-DISASTER-RESILIENCE/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION/URBAN-AND-COMMUNITY-RISK-MANAGEMENT.HTML](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/climate-and-disaster-resilience/disaster-risk-reduction/urban-and-community-risk-management.html)

<sup>25</sup> DISASTER AND CLIMATE RISK GOVERNANCE. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/UNDP/EN/HOME/CLIMATE-AND-DISASTER-RESILIENCE/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION/URBAN-AND-COMMUNITY-RISK-MANAGEMENT.HTML](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/climate-and-disaster-resilience/disaster-risk-reduction/urban-and-community-risk-management.html)

<sup>26</sup> DISASTER AND CLIMATE RISK GOVERNANCE. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/UNDP/EN/HOME/CLIMATE-AND-DISASTER-RESILIENCE/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION/URBAN-AND-COMMUNITY-RISK-MANAGEMENT.HTML](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/climate-and-disaster-resilience/disaster-risk-reduction/urban-and-community-risk-management.html)

<sup>27</sup> PREPAREDNESS AND EARLY WARNING. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/UNDP/EN/HOME/CLIMATE-AND-DISASTER-RESILIENCE/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION/URBAN-AND-COMMUNITY-RISK-MANAGEMENT.HTML](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/climate-and-disaster-resilience/disaster-risk-reduction/urban-and-community-risk-management.html)

<sup>28</sup> PREPAREDNESS AND EARLY WARNING. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/UNDP/EN/HOME/CLIMATE-AND-DISASTER-RESILIENCE/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION/URBAN-AND-COMMUNITY-RISK-MANAGEMENT.HTML](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/climate-and-disaster-resilience/disaster-risk-reduction/urban-and-community-risk-management.html)

<sup>29</sup> URBAN AND COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/UNDP/EN/HOME/CLIMATE-AND-DISASTER-RESILIENCE/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION/URBAN-AND-COMMUNITY-RISK-MANAGEMENT.HTML](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/climate-and-disaster-resilience/disaster-risk-reduction/urban-and-community-risk-management.html)

Successfully strengthening disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies is crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>30</sup> Through efforts in risk-inform development and also the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the SDGs are closer to its pursuance of urban and rural development.<sup>31</sup> Together with the UNDP, the implementation DRR to strengthen national and regional efforts, legal systems, and the ability of a state to work with other international bodies on climate adaptation efforts could be make possible.<sup>32</sup> In this manner, opportunities from the DRR and the Sendai Framework hold the key to a resilient future, according to the UNISDR.<sup>33</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTIONS

Governments of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands committed USD80 million of funding for improved early warning systems to almost 80 countries.<sup>34</sup> The United States, along with 186 Member States, have already adopted the Sendai Framework and have established local, national, and regional disaster response capacities.<sup>35</sup> The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been working with the Latin American and Caribbean Bloc to provide assistance to those in need in times of disasters. They have trained more than 70,000 personnel to manage disaster response, such as humanitarian and development aid in different communities.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. UNISDR. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/FILES/46052\\_DISASTERRISKREDUCTIONINTHE2030AGEND.PDF](https://www.unisdr.org/files/46052_disasterriskreductioninthe2030agend.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. UNISDR. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/FILES/46052\\_DISASTERRISKREDUCTIONINTHE2030AGEND.PDF](https://www.unisdr.org/files/46052_disasterriskreductioninthe2030agend.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.PREVENTIONWEB.NET/RISK/DRR-DRM](https://www.preventionweb.net/risk/drr-drm)

<sup>33</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. UNISDR. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/FILES/46052\\_DISASTERRISKREDUCTIONINTHE2030AGEND.PDF](https://www.unisdr.org/files/46052_disasterriskreductioninthe2030agend.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> WAHLSTRÖM, M. (2015). PARIS AGREEMENT SHOWS POLITICAL WILL TO REDUCE DISASTER RISK. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/ARCHIVE/47142](https://www.unisdr.org/archive/47142)

<sup>35</sup> USAID/OFDA'S APPROACH TO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION. (2018). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.USAID.GOV/WHAT-WE-DO/WORKING-CRISES-AND-CONFLICT/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION/USAIDOFDA-DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION](https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/disaster-risk-reduction/usaidofda-disaster-risk-reduction)

<sup>36</sup> USAID/OFDA'S APPROACH TO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION. (2018). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.USAID.GOV/WHAT-WE-DO/WORKING-CRISES-AND-CONFLICT/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION/USAIDOFDA-DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION](https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/disaster-risk-reduction/usaidofda-disaster-risk-reduction)



At present, disaster risk reduction in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is the most challenging because it has the most complex humanitarian emergencies around the world.<sup>37</sup> There are approximately 40 million people in MENA who are affected by natural disasters with floods, earthquakes, storms and drought being the most common.<sup>38</sup> The MENA cooperation has been working on ‘building community resilience’ through the IFRC Framework for resilience and the One Billion Coalition for Resilience Initiative, while considering every State’s capacity.<sup>39</sup> It includes regional partners in the field of disaster risk reduction such as the UNISDR, the World Bank, the Arab League, African Union, and the Gulf Cooperation Council. The MENA also works with the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), which has USD 59 million in finance for development. Governments across the region prioritize national-level disaster risk units, early warning systems, preparedness plans, and risk assessments.<sup>40</sup> The GFDRR especially wants to work with the public towards understanding of hazard risks.

In the same manner, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has formulated a work plan for disaster risk reduction and climate change as it is a region wherein a lot of natural disasters take place. It mainly focuses on water-related disasters including flood, storm, landslide, and drought.<sup>41</sup> This region formed the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) working group to put forth regional emergency response and humanitarian assistance capacities in times of disasters.<sup>42</sup> Governments within this region have

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<sup>37</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA. (2018). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.PREPARECENTER.ORG/RESOURCES/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION-MIDDLE-EAST-AND-NORTH-AFRICA](https://www.preparescenter.org/resources/disaster-risk-reduction-middle-east-and-north-africa)

<sup>38</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA. (2018). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.PREPARECENTER.ORG/RESOURCES/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION-MIDDLE-EAST-AND-NORTH-AFRICA](https://www.preparescenter.org/resources/disaster-risk-reduction-middle-east-and-north-africa)

<sup>39</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA. (2018). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.PREPARECENTER.ORG/RESOURCES/DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION-MIDDLE-EAST-AND-NORTH-AFRICA](https://www.preparescenter.org/resources/disaster-risk-reduction-middle-east-and-north-africa)

<sup>40</sup> MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA. (2018). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.GFDRR.ORG/INDEX.PHP/EN/REGION/MIDDLE-EAST-AND-NORTH-AFRICA](https://www.gfdr.org/index.php/en/region/middle-east-and-north-africa)

<sup>41</sup> ASEAN TO IMPLEMENT WORK PLAN FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE. (2018). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://ASEAN.ORG/ASEAN-TO-IMPLEMENT-WORK-PLAN-FOR-DISASTER-RISK-REDUCTION-AND-CLIMATE-CHANGE/](http://asean.org/asean-to-implement-work-plan-for-disaster-risk-reduction-and-climate-change/)

<sup>42</sup> ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ASEAN COMMITTEE ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT (ACDM): ASEAN'S REGIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE CAPACITIES PUT TO THE TEST IN SIMULATED TYPHOON DISASTER SCENARIO.

intensified efforts to strengthen collaboration towards disaster management and actions that tackle climate change.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) also takes a role in disaster risk management by providing relief materials, organizing health camps and rescue operations, building temporary locations, communication facilities, as well as training and education.<sup>43</sup>

## CURRENT POLICY INADEQUACIES OR CHALLENGES

In a study by Becker and Roth (2011), South African communities experience challenges with disaster risk reduction. They has observed an increase in vulnerabilities within its urban communities and ‘metropolitan’ centers and highlighted the following challenges: uncontrolled community growth, overcrowding of land area that result in unplanned settlements, conflict in development agendas and political disputes, lack of institutional capacity to provide housing, and community risk behavior. The challenge of mitigating risks is worsened by urban development, environmental degradation, poverty and inequality, and even weak governance.<sup>44</sup> It may be apparent that efforts towards disaster risk reduction have helped disaster management in both private and public sectors; however, according to Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström, there is still a huge potential for future loss.

The 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) has been a tool to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses by 2015. Governments, alongside the UNISDR, have been managing

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(2018). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://ASEAN.ORG/ANNOUNCEMENT-BY-THE-ASEAN-COMMITTEE-ON-DISASTER-MANAGEMENT-ACDM-ASEAN-S-REGIONAL-EMERGENCY-RESPONSE-AND-HUMANITARIAN-ASSISTANCE-CAPACITIES-PUT-TO-THE-TEST-IN-SIMULATED-TYPHOON-DISASTER-SCENARIO/](http://ASEAN.ORG/ANNOUNCEMENT-BY-THE-ASEAN-COMMITTEE-ON-DISASTER-MANAGEMENT-ACDM-ASEAN-S-REGIONAL-EMERGENCY-RESPONSE-AND-HUMANITARIAN-ASSISTANCE-CAPACITIES-PUT-TO-THE-TEST-IN-SIMULATED-TYPHOON-DISASTER-SCENARIO/)

<sup>43</sup> MONDAL, DEBABRATA & CHOWDHURY, SARTHAK & DASU, DEBABRATA. (2015). ROLE OF NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT. RESEARCH JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES. 6. 1485-1489.

<sup>44</sup> PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY INDICATORS FOR THE POST 2015 FRAMEWORK ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION. (2014). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/WE/INFORM/PUBLICATIONS/40967](https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/40967)

disasters through this framework.<sup>45</sup> While governments have been using the HFA through a monitoring system, it is insufficient because risk sensitive codes in monitored activities are not enforced with the lack of government capacity and public awareness especially in the informal sector.<sup>46</sup> It means that risk information from former assessments were not translated into policies because there was a lack of knowledge on how to utilize the gathered information.

Another issue is how to strengthen local capacities to implement DRR in situations in developing countries where creating local level mechanisms is also a challenge. Some countries find it hard to look into DRR issues mainly because of prior political and economic commitments. There is also a poor coordination between all the stakeholders. Lastly, most countries are still transitioning to emergency response based actions rather than the more preventive approach offered by the HFA.<sup>47</sup>

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Reducing disasters is crucial to the development of a sustainable environment for all. Throughout the years, approaches to disasters have solely focused on emergency responses, not taking into consideration the early warning signs and underlying drivers of risks. In addition, the impacts of climate change to this day has been a growing threat in all parts of the globe. This is a new challenge to the fulfillment of disaster reduction as natural and weather related hazards continue to be more frequent. The Sendai Framework becomes a very important tool in avoiding

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<sup>45</sup> PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY INDICATORS FOR THE POST 2015 FRAMEWORK ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION. (2014). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/WE/INFORM/PUBLICATIONS/40967](https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/40967)

<sup>46</sup> PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY INDICATORS FOR THE POST 2015 FRAMEWORK ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION. (2014). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/WE/INFORM/PUBLICATIONS/40967](https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/40967)

<sup>47</sup> PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY INDICATORS FOR THE POST 2015 FRAMEWORK ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION. (2014). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/WE/INFORM/PUBLICATIONS/40967](https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/40967)

these disasters with its strategic actions and list of priorities on disaster risk management, which also supports the Paris Action on Climate Change.

Disaster risk reduction is also vital to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Initiatives by actors in the international community should be prioritized, high population density must be addressed, and alternative location for inhabitants should be present.<sup>48</sup> There is also a need to allocate investments on housing and services, increase public awareness campaigns that counter risks, and urge all administrative and civil society to collaborate. Risks are most likely to be present in areas that are most vulnerable and so, it is important that vulnerability is eliminated through accessible information and anticipation to prepare us from ever being subjects to disasters.

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<sup>48</sup> DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. UNISDR. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/FILES/46052\\_DISASTERRISKREDUCTIONINTHE2030AGEND.PDF](https://www.unisdr.org/files/46052_disasterriskreductioninthe2030agend.pdf)

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What initiatives are being made by the Government, the private or civil society in your country to build the leadership capabilities of local communities in addressing disasters risks, building resilience and reducing vulnerabilities at their own level?
2. In what ways do the Government, the private sector and civil society organizations in your country collaborate in national disaster risk reduction efforts?
3. How have your public investments on disaster risk reduction efforts made an impact?
4. How is science and technology being used in your country to prevent disasters?
5. How is a culture of prevention created in order to address these disasters before they take into place? What actions are best in anticipating and reducing risks?
6. How are policy inadequacies or challenges on risk reduction efforts in your country being addressed?
7. What are the lessons learned from risk reduction efforts in your country? How are these being shared and used with various stakeholders to improve policies, plans and programs?
8. How can climate change be put into the same platform as disaster risk reduction?

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## **ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOP GOAL ONE BY 2030**

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
UNDP EXECUTIVE BOARD ISSUES BOOK  
MICHELLE THERESE Y DURAN – MIRIAM COLLEGE

The eradication of poverty in all forms has been defined in the second Chapter of Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in 2002 as the greatest global challenge. It is also regarded as the most imperative requirement for attaining sustainable development. According to a 2013 World Bank report, almost 1.1 billion people have been lifted out of poverty since 1990.<sup>1</sup> Although there has been a drastic decrease in the poverty statistics, there is still a significantly great number of people who cannot attain basic human needs such as food, clean drinking water, and sanitation. Some 10.7 percent of the global population lives on less than USD 1.90 a day and about 80 percent of the world's population live on less than USD 10 a day. Women, due to inequality, are more likely to suffer from poverty compared to men. The progress in the elimination of poverty has also been limited, especially in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>2</sup>

Today, issues such as climate change, global conflict, and food insecurity have contributed to continued poverty. As such, these issues must also be addressed in order to attain Goal 1 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **UNITED NATIONS ACTION**

In 1992, General Assembly resolution 47/134 on human rights and extreme poverty recognized that extreme poverty is a violation to human dignity and stressed the need for a complete and in-depth study of extreme poverty based on the experience and the thoughts of the

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<sup>1</sup> THE WORLD BANK. (N.D.) OVERVIEW OF POVERTY. RETRIEVED FROM:  
[HTTP://WWW.WORLDBANK.ORG/EN/TOPIC/POVERTY/OVERVIEW](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview)

<sup>2</sup> THE WORLD BANK. (N.D.) OVERVIEW OF POVERTY. RETRIEVED FROM:  
[HTTP://WWW.WORLDBANK.ORG/EN/TOPIC/POVERTY/OVERVIEW](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview)



poorest.<sup>3</sup> The General Assembly followed this resolution with the adoption of resolution 47/183 on 22 December 1992<sup>4</sup> declaring the observance of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, which aims to invite all Member States to dedicate the Day to presenting and promoting the eradication of poverty through various activities. The objective is to recognize the struggles of the men, women and children living in poverty and to give them a chance to let their voices be heard. Poverty eradication was also addressed by the General Assembly in the 1997 Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 as the theme of future sustainable development plans and considered as the most indispensable requirement of the international community. Poverty, as stressed in Agenda 21, is a complex multidimensional issue that has roots from national and international sources. Furthermore, various means must be used to efficiently solve the issue given the different origins of the problem. Agenda 21 states in Chapter III on combating poverty the importance of having country-specific programs to be implemented on a national level while international efforts provide support for these programs.<sup>5</sup>

The foreword of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals that 189 countries adopted through the Millennium Declaration pledged to “spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty.” There were continuous efforts to implement the MDGs but there have been lapses and issues continue to persist. Thus, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1, Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, committing to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions everywhere by 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals was developed “to build

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<sup>3</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY. (1992). “HUMAN RIGHTS AND EXTREME POVERTY (A/RES/48/134)” RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/DOCUMENTS/GA/RES/47/A47R134.HTM](http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/47/a47r134.htm)

<sup>4</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY. (1993). “INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY (A/RES/48/183)” RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/DOCUMENTS/GA/RES/48/A48R183.HTM](http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r183.htm)

<sup>5</sup> UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT. (1992). AGENDA 21, RIO DECLARATION, FOREST PRINCIPLES. NEW YORK: UNITED NATIONS. [HTTP://WWW.UN-DOCUMENTS.NET/A21-03.HTM](http://www.un-documents.net/A21-03.htm)

upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seek to address their unfinished business.”<sup>6</sup>

## THE SEVEN TARGETS OF SDG 1

Today, the Sustainable Development Goals envisions a world where all peoples can prosper and one that is free from poverty, hunger and disease. There are seven targets linked to Sustainable Development Goal 1 to be achieved by 2030. These targets serve as guidelines to fulfill the goal effectively.<sup>7</sup> The first target aims to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, which is measured by the people who live on less than USD1.25 a day. This target is determined by the ratio of the population living below the international poverty line, which is defined by the World Bank as those who live on USD1.90 a day.<sup>8</sup>

The second target calls for the reduction of the proportion of all those living in poverty in all its forms on the national level by half.<sup>9</sup> The assessment of poverty in a certain country depends on a poverty line that is appropriate for that country, as poverty lines may vary depending on purchasing power and economic gradient wherein various standards of living are adopted in different countries. This target is measured according to national definitions of poverty in all its aspects and forms and the ratio of a country’s population living below the national poverty line, which includes men, women, and children of all ages.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> UNITED NATIONS. (2015). UNITED NATIONS MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS. RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/MILLENNIUMGOALS/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)

<sup>7</sup> UNITED NATIONS (2015). GLOBAL INDICATOR FRAMEWORK FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND TARGETS OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (A/RES/71/313). RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTPS://UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/INDICATORS/GLOBAL%20INDICATOR%20FRAMEWORK%20AFTER%20REFINEMENT\\_ENG.PDF](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/global%20indicator%20framework%20after%20refinement_eng.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> THE WORLD BANK. (N.D.) OVERVIEW OF POVERTY. RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTP://WWW.WORLDBANK.ORG/EN/TOPIC/POVERTY/OVERVIEW](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview)

<sup>9</sup> UNITED NATIONS (2015). GLOBAL INDICATOR FRAMEWORK FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND TARGETS OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (A/RES/71/313). RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTPS://UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/INDICATORS/GLOBAL%20INDICATOR%20FRAMEWORK%20AFTER%20REFINEMENT\\_ENG.PDF](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/global%20indicator%20framework%20after%20refinement_eng.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> UNITED NATIONS (2015). GLOBAL INDICATOR FRAMEWORK FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND

The third target stipulates the implementation of nationally appropriate social protection systems for all and to attain significant coverage of the poor and vulnerable. Its respective indicator is the proportion of the population which is covered by social protection floors or systems. This refers to the set of social rights that are nationally defined, consisting of access to basic essential services such as health care, education, housing, clean water, and sanitation.<sup>11</sup>

The fourth target is related to basic services and focuses on the equal rights of all individuals, particularly the poor and vulnerable, to economic resources, basic services, ownership and control over land, as well as all other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, technology and financial services. This target is determined by the ratio of the population households that have access to these basic services, as well as, the ratio of the adult population who have secure tenure rights to land. Moreover, the governance of tenure plays a significant role in assessing how people and the society obtain their rights and obligations with regards to using and controlling land and other natural resources.<sup>12</sup>

The fifth target aims to build a resilient society where all individuals, especially the poor and vulnerable, reduce their exposure and vulnerability to disasters including economic, social, and environmental disasters. Its indicators include the death toll, the number of individuals who went missing and those who were affected by disasters per 100,000 people.<sup>13</sup> In March 2015, UN Members States adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 as a

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TARGETS OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (A/RES/71/313). RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTPS://UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/INDICATORS/GLOBAL%20INDICATOR%20FRAMEWORK%20AFTER%20REFINEMENT\\_ENG.PDF](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/global%20indicator%20framework%20after%20refinement_eng.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION. (N.D). SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOORS. RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTP://WWW.ILO.ORG/SECSOC/AREAS-OF-WORK/POLICY-DEVELOPMENT-AND-APPLIED-RESEARCH/SOCIAL-PROTECTION-FLOOR/LANG--EN/INDEX.HTM](http://www.ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/policy-development-and-applied-research/social-protection-floor/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>12</sup> UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION. (2018). "METADATA 01-04-02". RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTPS://UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/METADATA/FILES/METADATA-01-04-02.PDF](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/metadata-01-04-02.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION. (2018). "METADATA 01-05-01". RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTPS://UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/METADATA/FILES/METADATA-01-05-01.PDF](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/metadata-01-05-01.pdf)

global policy.<sup>14</sup> Given the set of global targets, two are committed to “substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower average per 100,000 global mortality between 2020-2030 compared with 2005-2015” and “substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 between 2020-2030 compared with 2005-2015”, which will help in efficiently strengthening resilience in economic, social, health and environmental aspects.<sup>15</sup>

The last two targets concentrate on the implementation of government programs that include ensuring the mobilization of resources through enhanced development cooperation and to establish a policy framework in all aspects such as the national, regional, and international levels in light of pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies. The indicators of these two (2) last targets are focused on the ratio of resources allocated and used by the government on poverty reduction programs and on essential services respectively.<sup>16</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTIONS

The progress in poverty reduction has been limited, especially in highly vulnerable regions such as South Asia and Africa. Extreme poverty that is brought about by internal strife such as that of Cote d’Ivoire has caused almost half of the population or about 46.3 per cent to

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<sup>14</sup> UNITED NATIONS (2015). GLOBAL INDICATOR FRAMEWORK FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND TARGETS OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (A/RES/71/313). RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTPS://UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/INDICATORS/GLOBAL%20INDICATOR%20FRAMEWORK%20AFTER%20REFINEMENT\\_ENG.PDF](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/global%20indicator%20framework%20after%20refinement_eng.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION. (2015). SENDAI FRAMEWORK FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION - UNISDR. RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTP://WWW.UNISDR.ORG/WE/COORDINATE/SENDAI-FRAMEWORK](http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework)

<sup>16</sup> UNITED NATIONS (2015). GLOBAL INDICATOR FRAMEWORK FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND TARGETS OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (A/RES/71/313). RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTPS://UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/INDICATORS/GLOBAL%20INDICATOR%20FRAMEWORK%20AFTER%20REFINEMENT\\_ENG.PDF](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/global%20indicator%20framework%20after%20refinement_eng.pdf)

live below the poverty line. Scarcity in housing has also contributed to the crisis as there has been inadequate resources and necessary tools to provide houses for their growing population.<sup>17</sup>

Today, there are numerous programmes that are implemented throughout the world with the aim of reducing poverty. One that focuses on Africa and has significantly helped in reducing poverty is the UNDP-led programme called *Programme d'Appui à la Réduction de la Pauvreté* (PARP, Poverty Reduction Support Programme) in partnership with the African Development Bank, Atlantic Financial Group, Belgian-Ivorian Development Fund, International Fund for Agricultural Development, Ivorian-Swiss Fund for Economic and Social Development and Newcrest Mining. The programme's primary objective is to improve living conditions in Côte d'Ivoire and focuses on three main goals of rehabilitation of education and health infrastructure, reintegration of ex-combatants and working through community-based groups to impact livelihoods. In a span of six years since its implementation in 2009, around 62 community organizations have been supported through cash donations, direct project funding, vocational training and technical expertise. PARP has also granted the *Association des Jeunes de l'ilot Asecna* (Asecna Island Youth Association) USD12,027,922 to purchase new fishing equipment and to start growing crops to help increase income and food options. In addition, the programme helped in rehabilitating infrastructure in various areas of the country, including eight elementary schools, eight hospitals, two community centres, 110 wells and 69 water pumps. As such, the programme led to an increase in usage of public services and has helped about 260,000 individuals.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> PRADHAN, P. (2017, MARCH 20). EXTREME POVERTY IN COTE D'IVOIRE. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://BORGENPROJECT.ORG/EXTREME-POVERTY-COTE-DIVOIRE/](https://borgenproject.org/extreme-poverty-cote-divoire/)

<sup>18</sup> UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (2016, APRIL 05). COTE D'IVOIRE: MORE THAN 250,000 PEOPLE SEE LIVES IMPROVE THROUGH ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMME. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.AFRICA.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/RBA/EN/HOME/PRESSCENTER/ARTICLES/2016/04/05/COTE-D-IVOIRE-MORE-THAN-250-000-PEOPLE-SEE-LIVES-IMPROVE-THROUGH-ANTI-POVERTY-PROGRAMME.HTML](http://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/presscenter/articles/2016/04/05/cote-d-ivoire-more-than-250-000-people-see-lives-improve-through-anti-poverty-programme.html)

In Samoa, the unemployment rate remains high at 16.4 per cent. To address this issue, the government of Samoa, along with five UN agencies collaborated and launched the One-UN Youth Employment Programme (One-UN YEP) to create jobs for the youth in villages, economic development, and to support entrepreneurship. Likewise, an initiative partnered by One-UN YEP and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources' Economy-wide Adaptation to Climate Change Project led to the creation of a project that concentrates on building sustainable agro-businesses. Another initiative that is implemented by the Matuailoo Environment Trust Inc. (METI) is the Taiala training programme that encourages families to build kitchen gardens to support their livelihood and to promote healthy diets by growing organic fruits and vegetables that will also help in increasing their income as they will be able to sell it at their local markets. The training helps farmers gain sufficient knowledge about various soils and plant diversity to be able to sustain them throughout the year to consistently generate income as crops harvest at different times. The support from UNDP allows farmers from 50 villages throughout the country to broaden their livelihood through consistent income-generating opportunities.

Aside from assistance provided by the United Nations System and on one's own government in the eradication of poverty, intergovernmental, international and non-governmental organizations also play key roles in helping governments address poverty. Intergovernmental organizations, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), has updated its core principles and aligned its strategies with the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, the ADB also linked its operations in line with the SDGs and is currently working with its developing member countries to determine new investments that help progress towards attaining the SDGs. ADB's strategies mainly include technical assistance, knowledge support and creating

new strategies for developing member countries to address SDGs that ADB is best able to support. Also, ADB has established partnerships with the United Nations, as well as the civil society, multilateral development banks, and the private sector in the fight against poverty.<sup>19</sup>

International organizations such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are committed to the SDGs and are actively contributing to the efforts through programs and services that to address the roots of vulnerability and to strengthen resilience. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have also pledged to continue to bolster their actions with the help of their local volunteers.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the organizations are creating new strategies and enhancing old ones to strengthen partnerships to support and to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

## CURRENT POLICY INADEQUACIES/CHALLENGES

Reducing poverty is the center of all efforts of the UNDP in all regions to achieve inclusive development and to advance human dignity. For this to successfully happen, change that starts in the grassroots level is required, as well as, providing assistance for countries to act on the interrelated and interconnected aspects of inequality and poverty.<sup>21</sup>

The UNDP has been focusing on four actions with regards to poverty reduction in Africa—promoting inclusive growth, making societies more resilient, boosting sustainability and halting and reversing HIV/AIDS.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, in Asia and the Pacific, income and social

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<sup>19</sup> ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK. (2017). "THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK'S TRANSITIONAL RESULTS FRAMEWORK, 2017-2020" RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTPS://WWW.ADB.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/INSTITUTIONAL-DOCUMENT/389801/TRANSITIONAL-RESULTS-  
FRAMEWORK-2017-2020.PDF](https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/389801/transitional-results-framework-2017-2020.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> THE RED CROSS EU. (2015). "RED CROSS CONTRIBUTION: ENHANCING EQUAL PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPLEMENT THE 2030 AGENDA" RETRIEVED FROM: [HTTPS://REDCROSS.EU/LATEST-NEWS/RED-CROSS-CONTRIBUTION-ENHANCING-EQUAL-  
PARTNERSHIPS-TO-IMPLEMENT-THE-2030-AGENDA](https://redcross.eu/latest-news/red-cross-contribution-enhancing-equal-partnerships-to-implement-the-2030-agenda)

<sup>21</sup> UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME. (N.D.). UNDP AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN AFRICA. RETRIEVED JULY 28, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.AFRICA.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/RBA/EN/HOME/LIBRARY/OUTREACH-MATERIAL/FAST-FACTS-POVERTY/](http://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/library/outreach-material/fast-facts-poverty/)

<sup>22</sup> UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (N.D.). IN-DEPTH (AFRICA). RETRIEVED JULY 20, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.AFRICA.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/RBA/EN/HOME/OURWORK/POVERTYREDUCTION/IN\\_DEPTH.HTML](http://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/in_depth.html)

inequality remain to be the primary challenges as progress has been evidently inconsistent.

Countries that previously faced high inequality rates such as Thailand, Malaysia, Nepal and the Philippines have seen a decrease, while those that have witnessed low-inequality rates have seen a significant increase such as that of India, Bangladesh and Indonesia. This inconsistency can be based on the uneven and limited development throughout the region where there is an uneven demand between skilled and unskilled labor, as well as, the lack of access to education, basic services, infrastructure, and insufficient inclusive policies.<sup>23</sup>

Political will is the key to attaining Sustainable Development Goal 1. If global and local leaders commit to change, then change is likely to happen. However, if leaders lack the political will to consistently implement efforts, then eliminating poverty will be severely compromised. Additionally, local governments face complex problems and oftentimes do not have the ability nor the sufficient resources to solve these problems. Improving local governments through support and funding is usually overlooked due to the differences in priorities on the national level.

It is also important to note how countries will manage urbanization in the future because it will have an effect on how governments will be able to address poverty. Another challenge is how to measure global poverty because the differences in the cost of living throughout the world, which continually change, make it difficult to arrive at a standard. In addition, there is a lack of reliable data to help in efficiently measure poverty in some countries. Acquiring reliable data is crucial in evaluating and defining poverty within an area because it becomes the basis of planning appropriate programs and initiatives. Another challenge facing countries is ensuring that programs and their implementation are appropriate to the local context because determining

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<sup>23</sup> UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (N.D.). IN-DEPTH (ASIA AND THE PACIFIC). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.ASIA-PACIFIC.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/RBAP/EN/HOME/OURWORK/SUSTAINABLE-DEVELOPMENT/IN\\_DEPTH.HTML](http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/ourwork/sustainable-development/in_depth.html)



the national definition of poverty can be tricky in some instances, particularly when instabilities such as conflicts and effects of climate change come into play. Every time these and other issues arise, the national definition of poverty, as well as, the existing programs must be adjusted to be fit for the current situation of the country.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the huge number of people lifted from extreme poverty, inequalities continue to exist and progress towards eliminating poverty continues to be uneven as the population of people living in poverty remains high. Meanwhile, the progress of those who have been lifted from extreme poverty is oftentimes not permanent as other threats such as climate change can bring them back to the level of extreme poverty. The inconsistent implementation and lack of political will are major hindrances in the eradication of poverty. In some countries, access to essential basic services are still dictated by certain factors such as gender, socioeconomic status and ethnicity.

Poverty is a multidimensional issue that requires an integrated approach focusing on its interconnected causes. Such an approach is essential in achieving Goal 1 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as, all other SDGs. The eradication of poverty is an obligation shared by all Member States; hence, all Member States must come together to fight against this global issue of poverty.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is the flagship program of your country in addressing and eradicating poverty?
2. What progress has your country made towards achieving Goal 1 of the SDGs?
3. Has your country received any official development assistance (ODA) or any other form of support from another country or international organizations to help you attain SDG 1? What is the impact of this aid?
4. Has your country provided funding or any kind of assistance to other countries to help them achieve SDG 1? What are the details/parameters of these aid packages?
5. How has your country participated in UN-led programmes to alleviate poverty?
6. What are your recommendations to the United Nations System and its Member States to effectively achieve SDG 1?

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# UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY

## 69TH SESSION ISSUES BOOK

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OCEAN ACIDIFICATION AND ITS THREAT TO FOOD SECURITY

NATURAL RESOURCE EXTRACTION AND THE IMPACT ON  
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

ADDRESSING AIR POLLUTION IN THE CONTEXT OF  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL THREE



MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST  
69TH SESSION



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

69TH ANNUAL SESSION

OUR COMMON HUMANITY: BACK TO THE PRINCIPLES OF  
THE UN CHARTER

UNEA'S FUNCTIONS INCLUDE SETTING THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA;  
PROVIDING OVERARCHING POLICY GUIDANCE AND DEFINING POLICY  
RESPONSES TO ADDRESS EMERGING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES;  
UNDERTAKING POLICY REVIEW, DIALOGUE AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES;  
SETTING STRATEGIC GUIDANCE ON THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF UNEP;  
ORGANIZING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE; AND FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS AND RESOURCES MOBILIZATION. THE  
ASSEMBLY REPORTS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THROUGH ECOSOC.

SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNIVERSAL MEMBERSHIP IN 2013, ALL 193  
UN MEMBER STATES HAVE BEEN MEMBERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY.  
(UN HANDBOOK, 2017-18)

THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY BOOK WAS PREPARED  
BY THE STUDENTS OF WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY FOR THE 69TH  
SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

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# OCEAN ACIDIFICATION AND THE THREAT TO FOOD SECURITY

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY ISSUES BOOK  
JENNY ROOPER – WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

Ocean acidification, the temperature change and lowering of pH within natural water resources due to excess carbon dioxide reacting with water molecules to form bicarbonate, has rapidly increased, currently rated as being 50 times faster than known historical change.<sup>1</sup> With the excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the nature of the world's oceans to be a carbon sink, rates of ocean acidification continue to increase as carbon emissions do, projected to drop another 120 per cent by the end of this century, “making an ocean more acidic than any seen for the past 20 million years or more.”<sup>2</sup> In terms of food security - the state having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food - ocean acidification has vast effects on marine wildlife. Thus food security and economic standing is impacted in nations that heavily rely on oceans or are found in “ocean acidification hotspots,” where ocean acidification is occurring at even faster rates.<sup>3</sup> High presence of bicarbonate has the ability to weaken or kill calcifying species, increase the number and dexterity of aquatic diseases, and alter the distribution and productivity of marine species. This means that more aquatic life is dying or being displaced, creating a lack of food sources, or possibly weakening said food sources, resulting in the collection of diseased animals and meat. This disease can include coral bleaching, the ‘de-

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<sup>1</sup>Walsh, John, and Donald Wuebbles. “Ocean Acidification.” *Global Change*, U.S. Global Change Research Program, Aug. 2016, [nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/our-changing-climate/ocean-acidification](http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/our-changing-climate/ocean-acidification).

<sup>2</sup>The Ocean Portal Team. “Ocean Acidification.” Edited by Jennifer Bennett, *Ocean Portal | Smithsonian*, Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, 14 May 2018, [ocean.si.edu/ocean-life/invertebrates/ocean-acidification](http://ocean.si.edu/ocean-life/invertebrates/ocean-acidification).

<sup>3</sup>Walsh, John, and Donald Wuebbles. “Ocean Acidification.” *Global Change*, U.S. Global Change Research Program, Aug. 2016, [nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/our-changing-climate/ocean-acidification](http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/our-changing-climate/ocean-acidification).



shelling' and killing of calcifying species such as oysters, clams, crabs, lobsters, mussels, sea urchins and coral, congenital diseases or conditions, fatigue, and much more. With the decrease of pH and changes of temperature, more and more species continue to be displaced, resulting in drastic migration pattern changes, reproduction timeline changes, and species differentiation changes. Some species are even displaced to different oceans and seas, creating difficulties in commercial fishing or marine research. Plus, higher traces of carbon dioxide increase the survival rates of plant and algal species, with the possibility of promoting the growth of large scale algal blooms that contaminate drinking water and create fish die-offs.

Seafood is the primary protein source for the poorest of people and countries, counting for more than 1 billion of the poorest people and currently, “3.2 billion people rely on fish for almost 20 percent of their animal protein intake.”<sup>4</sup> In addition, while wild caught seafood is the healthiest seafood-based protein, the collecting of healthy seafood will decrease as ocean acidification increases. Forthwith, one has to consider the amount of fishing taking place; one third of oceans are being overfished by both developed and developing countries, and the global percentage of stocks fished at unsustainable levels increased to 33.1 in 2015, from 31.4 in 2013 and 10 in 1974.<sup>5</sup> Alongside that, fishery production is reducing with an estimated decline of 2.8 to 5.4 per cent by the year 2050.<sup>6</sup> Additionally with the shifting and relocating of fish populations, there's the possibility the national incomes of fish-dependent countries will be highly affected.

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<sup>4</sup>Lei Win, Thin. “World's Fish Consumption Unsustainable, U.N. Warns.” *Thomson Reuters Foundation News*, Thomas Reuters Foundation, 9 July 2018, [news.trust.org/item/20180709070101-6yudp/](https://news.trust.org/item/20180709070101-6yudp/).

<sup>5</sup>Lei Win, Thin. “World's Fish Consumption Unsustainable, U.N. Warns.” *Thomson Reuters Foundation News*, Thomas Reuters Foundation, 9 July 2018, [news.trust.org/item/20180709070101-6yudp/](https://news.trust.org/item/20180709070101-6yudp/).

<sup>6</sup>Wahlen, Catherine Benson. “FAO Report Projects Climate Change Impacts on World's Fisheries | News | SDG Knowledge Hub | IISD.” *SDG Knowledge Hub*, IISD, 11 July 2018, [sdg.iisd.org/news/fao-report-projects-climate-change-impacts-on-worlds-fisheries/?utmmedium=email](https://sdg.iisd.org/news/fao-report-projects-climate-change-impacts-on-worlds-fisheries/?utmmedium=email).

## IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG 12 VIA 10YFP ON SCP

Food security, is an important focus within the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the General Assembly on September 25, 2015. In particular Goal number 12, related to responsible consumption and production, is of importance to this topic. On July 10, 2018 a High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) addressing the 10YFP on SCP (10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production) was held. During the forum emphasis was placed on enforcing SDG 12 alongside promoting coordination among governments and non-government organizations (NGOs). The forum produced a strategy called the ‘One Plan for One Planet’ and created the One Planet Network. The strategy’s objectives include: “catalyzing action by providing tools and solutions that shift to Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP); leading systemic and cohesive SCP implementation; and demonstrating SCP impacts and its role in addressing environmental and social challenges.”<sup>7</sup> It’s also important to note the One Planet Network’s coordinating and synergistic role for accelerating action on the ground, local projects that focus on sustainable food systems, and SCP promotion as an entry point for addressing other SDGs.

In addition, on July 14, 2017, calls to the Secretary-General to recognize and implement SDG 14, life below water, in the context of the 2030 agenda was made via General Assembly Resolution 71/312 including the declaration “Our ocean, our future: call for action” adopted into the annex providing support, strategies, and resources towards meeting SDG 14.<sup>8</sup> This call to action requested that states not only recognize the changing health and productivity of the oceans, as well as note the role oceans hold and possible sustainable uses of our oceans.

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<sup>7</sup>Mead, Leila. “HLPF Side Event Launches Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production| News | SDG Knowledge Hub | IISD.” *SDG Knowledge Hub*, IISD, 11 July 2018, [sdg.iisd.org/news/hlpf-side-event-launches-strategy-for-sustainable-consumption-and-production/?utm\\_medium=email](https://sdg.iisd.org/news/hlpf-side-event-launches-strategy-for-sustainable-consumption-and-production/?utm_medium=email).

<sup>8</sup>General Assembly Resolution 71/312, *Our ocean, our future: call to action*, A/RES/71/312 (14 July 2017), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N17/207/56/PDF/N1720756.pdf?OenElement>.

## SEEKING EFFECTIVE TREATMENT

General Assembly Resolution 71/257 acknowledges ocean acidification and its global, national, and local impacts, as well as recommending preventative measures and strategies to acidification cessation and spread. The resolution brings forth solutions that can be applied to communities alongside governments and international policy, providing inclusive tactics such as, but not limited to:

1. Improving research needs in order to access information for decision-making
2. Local and national management that is adaptive to address complexity
3. International policy with dynamic leadership to facilitate change.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, General Assembly Annex 67/810 of March 26, 2013 discusses the economical impacts ocean acidification holds alongside including recommended procedures and steps towards battling ocean acidification and obtaining sustainable aquatic food development and gathering within each specific ocean and sea. The article also promotes the funding of research focused on the effects ocean acidification has on marine life as well as economical advantages towards aquacultures and marine farming.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>United Nations, General Assembly, *Oceans and the Law of the Sea*  
[http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_71\\_257.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_71_257.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>United Nations, General Assembly, *Economics of ocean acidification: letter to secretary general and annex*, A/67/810 (26 March 2013),  
<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/271/47/PDF/N1327147.pdf?OpenElement>.

## GEOENGINEERING

One solution discussed is ocean and marine geoengineering that would assist in halting climate change globally through localized interventions and therefore assisting in ocean acidification depletion.

Geoengineering is a term that covers large-scale, targeted interventions in the Earth's atmosphere, the oceans and the biosphere. There are two basic directions that potential manipulation of the climate could take: solar radiation management involves activities that reflect the sun's rays back into space so the climate heats up less; and carbon dioxide removal involves activities whereby the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide is separated out from the atmosphere. In regard to the second option, climate scientists have proposed that the oceans could be used to absorb and store even more carbon dioxide than they already do.<sup>11</sup>

One way proposed to achieve the second option is 'ocean fertilization,' where thousands of tons of iron filling or other nutrients would be dumped in the oceans each year to stimulate plankton growth.<sup>12</sup> These plankton would then bind carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to themselves, die, and sink to the bottom of the ocean, thus removing said carbon dioxide from circulation. In order for a significant change within the climate, large areas would have to receive 'fertilization' -- up to a quarter of oceans. Yet one has to take into account the ingestion of said plankton and the continued circulation of carbon dioxide through the food cycle, along with the possibility of the development of large algal blooms, resulting in mass death and possible extinction of fish species.

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<sup>11</sup> Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. "A techno fix for the climate? Marine geoengineering." *Youtube*, Part 1, Heinrich Böll Foundation, 8 June 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iu7po7N6c&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>12</sup> Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. "A techno fix for the climate? Marine geoengineering." *Youtube*, Part 1, Heinrich Böll Foundation, 8 June 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iu7po7N6c&feature=youtu.be>

Another geoengineering proposal present is solar radiation management.<sup>13</sup> Due to the dark surface of the oceans, sunlight is rarely reflected and high levels of heat energy are absorbed and then released into the atmosphere, however, introducing reflective properties, such as tiny light-reflecting plastic beads or foams distributed on the sea or ice surface, would ensure less solar energy stored in the oceans. On the other hand, this means that all ocean life forms would have to make do with less sunlight and increased stress levels. Additionally, such a layer would diminish the oxygen supply in the surface water as well as hold the possibility of being ingested by wildlife.

However, geoengineering is subject to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Waste Other Matter (London Protocol of 1996), meaning that ocean fertilization is strictly prohibited. But new experiments continue to be announced and partially implemented, especially under questionable guises.

## OTHER PREVENTATIVE SOLUTIONS

Another strategy proposed is to build the capacity of Member States' agencies that should enforce clean water acts and marine protected areas, including mandating the amount of pollution being released and the ability to fish in certain coastal areas; as well as having fisheries manage resources sustainably, cease overfishing, and reduce bycatch and destructive fishing practices in consideration to the impacts of ocean acidification. The expansion of marine protection would not only reduce overfishing and pollution, it also allows for the improvement of biodiversity as wildlife naturally evolves defenses towards ocean acidification. These actions could resulting in natural population growth and rehabilitation in the presence of ocean

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<sup>13</sup> Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. "A techno fix for the climate? Marine geoengineering." *Youtube*, Part 1, Heinrich Böll Foundation, 8 June 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iu7po7N6c&feature=youtu.be>

acidification and its threats. One could also incorporate more Coastal Zone Management Plans<sup>14</sup>, to not only educate the populace, but to include ocean acidification threats within their state management plans. Additionally, more research and working groups that consistently monitor impacts of ocean acidification are necessary to have real-time and long-term ocean pH data.

Policymakers have advised creating educational programs for youth in order to highlight ocean acidification and its importance in addition to the hope of conjuring more adaptive strategies. These efforts include making more uneatable, yet highly nutritious, portions of seafood into palatable food -- this includes pieces such as fish heads or bones. With higher food usage, the amount of fishing needed to provide sustainable food would decrease.

## CONCLUSION

The future challenges we face in relation to ocean acidification and food security are generating successful calls to action that correctly focus on and manage ocean acidification, SDG 14 and its targets, and aquatic food security. It is of the utmost importance and relevance to the United Nations that food security, especially aquatic food security currently being threatened by ocean acidification, is recognized and addressed. This is of particular concern for those in developing countries with a lack of other food resources. It is also important to note the necessary search for plausible solutions to aquatic food security replacements in regards to the current decrease in the amounts of seafood and marine life.

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<sup>14</sup> See for example: [https://www.gwp.org/en/learn/iwrm-toolbox/Management-Instruments/Planning\\_for\\_IWRM/Coastal\\_zone\\_management\\_plans/](https://www.gwp.org/en/learn/iwrm-toolbox/Management-Instruments/Planning_for_IWRM/Coastal_zone_management_plans/)

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the fish and marine species consumption levels in your state? Are you reliant on these species for food security? Is it possible for your Member State to find new or other food resources?
2. How threatening is ocean acidification to your Member State in terms of your economic and food security?
3. Should solutions towards ocean acidification and its threats be drafted nationally or multilaterally?
4. What should the UN, the Environment Assembly specifically, do as both preventative and resolving measures?
5. If desired, what is your Member State willing to provide to other states battling ocean acidification and its threats?

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# NATURAL RESOURCE EXTRACTION AND THE IMPACT ON VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY ISSUES BOOK  
AMBER HOLLAND – WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

The United Nations' 2016 High-level Political Forum *Ensuring that No One is Left Behind: Reaching the most vulnerable* addressed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) focus on vulnerable populations. As noted, they discussed specifically the “concrete barriers” to and “concrete measures” necessary to help the “poorest and most vulnerable.” The SDGs have numerous references to vulnerable populations: “A range of Goals and Targets, including those on poverty; on food security, nutrition and agriculture; . . . on water and sanitation; . . . make specific reference to the poor and vulnerable or those in vulnerable situations.” In addition, the Forum identified the precarious situation that the poor and vulnerable face

because of disabilities, lack of resources, language and literacy barriers, distance, formal and legal impediments, cultural practices, social norms and others, these groups are often excluded from the channels through which the benefits of policy, government action, and economic development are conveyed.<sup>1</sup>

In short, vulnerable populations are easily exploited and often the most harmed by economic development and especially the extraction of natural resources. Revenues from resource extraction often put wealth and power in the hands of the few, thereby furthering inequality, poverty and levels of corruption<sup>2</sup>. It is essential for the United Nations to take extraordinary measures to identify the cases and causes of their exploitation as well as the means and support

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<sup>1</sup> UNITED NATIONS, DIVISION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, UN-DESA, 2016, ENSURING THAT NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND: REACHING THE MOST VULNERABLE [HTTPS://SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPMENT.UN.ORG/INDEX.PHP?PAGE=VIEW&TYPE=20000&NR=348&MENU=2993](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=20000&nr=348&menu=2993) [ACCESSED SEPTEMBER 29, 2018].

<sup>2</sup> (UNITED NATIONS)

for protecting this group. It is essential for the United Nations to take extraordinary measures to identify the cases and causes of venerable population and natural resource exploitation.

Trees, water, oil, and coal are just a few of the world's most exploited natural resources. A report from the UN Environmental Program notes that our natural resource consumption has more than tripled in the last 40 years, causing possibly irreversible damage to the Earth. Unsustainable natural resource extraction to feed our high consumption levels negatively affects economies, the environment, and public health. For example, a review of world energy use by British Petroleum showed that at the current global production rate we only have enough oil for the next 49 years<sup>3</sup>. In addition, numerous reports over the last 20 years have raised significant concern over the sustainability of resource extraction and the adverse effect it has on vulnerable populations, who often have little power or voice in what happens to their communities.

Rising material use negatively impacts biodiversity in many places in the world. These changes can endanger people's ability to find food and shelter, and may even cause long lasting health issues. For example, the logging and mining industries have expelled many pollutants causing rises in cancer and rare diseases. However, while the effects of resource extraction to produce consumer goods are felt around the world, the poor and vulnerable are particularly threatened by the negative effects. problematic<sup>4</sup>. Natural resource extraction is an essential part of connecting environmental degradation and human activity to the exploitation and human rights abuses faced by vulnerable populations.

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<sup>3</sup> DELALLO, M. (2014, JUNE 28). THE WORLD HAS 53.3 YEARS OF OIL LEFT. RETRIEVED SEPTEMBER 8, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.USATODAY.COM/STORY/MONEY/BUSINESS/2014/06/28/THE-WORLD-WAS-533-YEARS-OF-OIL-LEFT/11528999/](https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2014/06/28/the-world-was-533-years-of-oil-left/11528999/)

<sup>4</sup>

## NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF RESOURCES EXTRACTION: FORESTS

Healthy forests are an essential component of a healthy environment and the benefits of a modern society. Trees store carbon, provide food, clean water, and protect communities. Scientists believe forests hide the key to cure diseases such as AIDS and cancer. In addition, forestry and agriculture make up 24% of greenhouse gas emissions as cutting down trees can release their stored carbon into the atmosphere. Over 2 billion people rely on forests for food and shelter.<sup>5</sup> Some describe deforestation as the "Modern Day Plague", with FAO estimating 18 million acres of forest are lost each year<sup>6</sup>. Scientists predict that all rainforests will be gone in the next 100 years if the current rates continue. Countries such as Afghanistan have already lost 70% of their forests due to agricultural and business pressure, resulting in more extreme temperatures and desert spaces<sup>7</sup>. Significantly, some of the world's most vulnerable populations rely on forests for subsistence. Extraction of forests for profit often leads to vulnerable populations being pushed from their lands and even murdered in some cases.

## BRAZIL AND THE AMAZON

Once a success story for deforestation reform, Brazil has begun to slide backward in their environmental policies returning to heavy logging of trees from the Amazon forests, increased mining and clearing of timber for land to raise crops and cattle to help their economy<sup>8</sup>. The immediate negative environmental impacts of deforestation have been felt. The 2014-17 drought in the Sao Paulo region is largely attributed to continued deforestation in the Amazon river basin. At the same time, powerful companies with industrial and agricultural interests have overruled

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<sup>5</sup> DEFORESTATION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE PLANET. (2017, JULY 25). RETRIEVED AUGUST 7, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM/ENVIRONMENT/GLOBAL-WARMING/DEFORESTATION](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/deforestation)

<sup>6</sup> RINKESH. (2017, DECEMBER 27). 51 BREATHTAKING FACTS ABOUT DEFORESTATION. RETRIEVED AUGUST 9, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.CONSERVE-ENERGY-FUTURE.COM/VARIOUS-DEFORESTATION-FACTS.PHP](https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/various-deforestation-facts.php)

<sup>7</sup> RINKESH. 51 BREATHTAKING FACTS ABOUT DEFORESTATION.

<sup>8</sup> REUTERS. (2018, MARCH 01). BRAZIL 'INVITES DEFORESTATION' WITH OVERHAUL OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS. RETRIEVED AUGUST 09, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.THEGUARDIAN.COM/WORLD/2018/MAR/01/BRAZIL-AMAZON-PROTECTION-LAWS-INVITE-DEFORESTATION-NGO](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/01/brazil-amazon-protection-laws-invite-deforestation-ngo)

many efforts to reduce the exploitation and improve water systems in order to supplement the environmental losses.

One dramatic example of the exploitation of a vulnerable people is the large-scale deforestation in Brazil to make room for farms because of the rising demand for soy, cocoa, coffee. The deforestation in the Amazon has caused many alarming cases of poor people being coerced from their homes and forced to work on soybean farms under inhumane conditions- many times at gunpoint. In 2012 reports of human rights abuses to the Awa tribe, which have only around 300 members, began to arise. In addition, Brazil's inability to curb the illegal logging industry has led to the building of illegal settlements to run cattle ranches. Hired gunmen have been reported to be hunting the last of the Awa tribe in order to get their land and put them into labor camps or kill them. The human rights abuses have been caused by international actors as well. The region first became at risk in 1982 when the European Economic Community and World Bank funded a project to build a railway through Awa land in order to extract iron ore from the Carajas Mountains. Since then the area has been ruled by powerful logging and farming companies. The tribes that live off the forest fear that if they are not killed by the hitmen, then they will die from starvation because their land is being killed as well. It was not until 2014 that the Brazil government sent in troops to expel the illegal loggers, but the tribe still remains at risk. Although the abuses seem to be a local problem, they occur because of consumer goods such as soybeans- making it a global issue<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> CHAMBERLAIN, G. (2012, APRIL 21). 'THEY'RE KILLING US': WORLD'S MOST ENDANGERED TRIBE CRIES FOR HELP. RETRIEVED JULY 15, 2018, FROM [HTTPS://WWW.THEGUARDIAN.COM/WORLD/2012/APR/22/BRAZIL-RAINFEST-AWA-ENDANGERED-TRIBE](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/22/brazil-rainforest-awa-endangered-tribe)

## MEKONG RIVER BASIN AND FOREST

The Greater Mekong Forest used to be the world's most dense forest, spanning over six states in South Asia. Today this area serves as an example of the double-edged sword of hyper economic development. Over 70 million people depend on the Mekong ecosystem for shelter, food, and water. Due to a rich biodiversity, the region has become a hub of natural resource extraction. In the last 20 years this region has experienced significant economic growth with the annual GDP growth in the last decade of 6.8%. This is predominantly due to natural resource extraction with unsustainable practices. Since the 1970s the Mekong sub-region has lost almost a third of its forest cover leaving the area increasingly threatened and the population very vulnerable<sup>10</sup>.

The forest protects the Mekong river which produces 4.5 million metric tons of fish per year. Overfishing has become a major problem in this area, but the 4 billion USD industry has no interest in slowing down. However, the food security of the local population who rely on fish for food is severely threatened:

Water and food are inseparable along the Mekong. The river, its floodplains, and wetlands sustain about 61 million people living in four countries... Most people earn their livelihoods through small scale, subsistence farming and fishing . . . At least 60% of the household diet comes from subsistence0based rice production and fishing... wild fishery is especially important for the poorest and landless rural households in the lower Mekong basin, making significant contributions to their nutrition, food security and income.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, the deforestation for agricultural expansion has led to the loss of jobs, increases in extreme weather, devastating mudslides, and poor health<sup>12</sup>. Often, the economic benefits of

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<sup>10</sup> MEKONG RIVER. (N.D.). RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.WORLDWILDLIFE.ORG/PLACES/GREATER-MEKONG](https://www.worldwildlife.org/places/greater-mekong)

<sup>11</sup> LILAO BOUAPAO AND KARLYN ECKMAN, 2012, "FOOD SECURITY AND VULNERABILITY IN THE LOWER MEKONG RIVER BASIN" WATER AND FOOD (NOVEMBER), PP. 6-9.

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resource extraction are not distributed equitably giving no benefit to the vulnerable populations in the area.

## NEGATIVE IMPACT OF RESOURCE EXTRACTION: MINING

Mining is the extraction of minerals and other geological materials of economic value from deposits on the earth and is the economic foundation for many developing countries, providing both jobs and revenue. In addition, extraction of geological materials is a controversial political issue within and between Member States. However important mining is to the economy, the industry has become a central part in the discussion of pollution and its impact on humans' quality of life. Different types of mining can greatly affect public health and have significant environmental impacts on both developed and developing countries. Significantly, industrialized and developing countries may not experience the same risks of natural resource extraction because of the economic benefits and costs.

## CANADIAN TAR SANDS

The Tar Sands lie beneath more than 141,000 square kilometers of Alberta forest, making it the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest oil deposit in the world. In 2003 Canadian oil companies began to mine the petroleum and send it to the United States through pipelines, such as Keystone XL, for refining. Overtime, the local population, many who would not have considered themselves anti-oil when Baytex Energy first began to mine by their homes, have begun to experience significant hardships. A clear example of the exploitation of vulnerable populations, many indigenous communities were paid to lease their land for extraction of oil but were not fully made aware of the significant risks. By 2006, the First Nations people were already seeing the side effects. Residents are experiencing a collection of symptoms that are believed to be caused by the toxic

fumes emitted from factories. Headaches, nausea, and dizziness was felt throughout the entire community<sup>13</sup>. Cancer, birth defects, and rare diseases are on the rise in residents and wildlife.

The mining process involves heating up the sands in order to separate the oil from the sands. One Sandford study showed that this process released up to 20% more greenhouse gases than conventional forms of mining petroleum. There are more than 1,400 known pollutants emitted by oil or "tar sands" operations. This has to lead to 11 million liters of toxic wastewater to be disposed of into the Athabasca River which then seeps into the groundwater flowing downstream into the Indigenous territories. Scientists have found many different carcinogenic compounds in the water and air. The extraction of oil from tar sands requires billions of gallons of water, 82% of which comes from the Athabasca River. This river has been a large part of the First Nations culture and livelihood. The once blue Athabasca river is now brown with toxins and not safe to fish or drink from<sup>14</sup>.

Although extraction from the Tar Sands is causing irreversible damage to the local communities, the extraction of oil continues<sup>15</sup>. The national government as well as the Province of Alberta have experienced significant increases in revenues. Despite the enormous health risks, residents and indigenous people are feeling the pressure from the Canadian government and oil companies to continue extraction. The Alberta Tar Sands are a keystone for the local economy, supplying over 140,000+ jobs. The area contains an estimated 165.4 billion barrels of oil<sup>16</sup>. For the eighth fiscal year in a row, oil royalty made the largest contribution to provincial resource royalty revenue; collecting totaled a \$1.48 billion in 2016-17. For Canadians,

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<sup>13</sup> EDWARDS, J. (2014, APRIL 26). CANADA'S OIL SANDS RESIDENTS COMPLAIN OF HEALTH EFFECTS. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.THELANCET.COM/JOURNALS/LANCET/ARTICLE/PIIS0140-6736\(14\)60703-0/FULLTEXT](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/LANCET/article/PIIS0140-6736(14)60703-0/FULLTEXT)

<sup>14</sup> INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK. (2018). TAR SANDS. RETRIEVED OCTOBER 10, 2018, FROM [HTTP://WWW.IENEARTH.ORG/WHAT-WE-DO/TAR-SANDS/](http://www.ienearth.org/what-we-do/tar-sands/)

<sup>15</sup> INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK. (2018)

<sup>16</sup> GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA. (N.D.). FACTS AND STATISTICS. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.ENERGY.ALBERTA.CA/OS/AOS/PAGES/FAS.ASPX](https://www.energy.alberta.ca/OS/AOS/PAGES/FAS.ASPX)



the mining of Tar Sands oil is complex, some citizens see this as an opportunity to grow their economy and compete in the oil business<sup>17</sup>, while others abhor the destruction of the Earth's crust, the deadly forest fires that have decimated the region and the human rights abuses experienced by the indigenous population. Nonetheless for many, the potential to have a sustainable economy far outweigh the environmental costs.

## UNITED STATES COAL INDUSTRY

In 2016 as President Trump promised to revive the coal industry, the residents of West Virginia could not help but rejoice. After 200 years of underground mining, the coal supply has declined significantly. Over time companies have begun to surface mine the Appalachian Mountains; this involves blowing up a surface area and finding coal in the rubble. Surface mining has had a significant negative impact on the local ecosystem, with extra surface rock being put into river valleys and permanently damaging the landscape. Another concern is that the toxic chemicals being stored in the rock are released into the air and water during the mining process. However, many people in the communities are excited about secured jobs and increasing economic growth. However, scientists remain increasingly concerned about the impact mining is having on public health and the permanent damage being done to the mountains. Former coal miner Clay Mullins feels differently about the mining, claiming that you can already see the intense damage it has done to the Appalachian landscape. He notes that the local wildlife has been greatly affected now that 10% of the region is either active or reclaimed mines<sup>18</sup>. Although companies have set up protections, scientific testing has shown that streams are still presenting high levels of contaminants, putting the local communities at high-risk. The

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<sup>17</sup> PERSONAL INTERVIEW WITH BRYCE WELLS

<sup>18</sup> O'BRIEN, M. (2017, MAY 3). HOW MOUNTAINTOP MINING AFFECTS LIFE AND LANDSCAPE IN WEST VIRGINIA. RETRIEVED FROM PBS: [HTTPS://WWW.PBS.ORG/NEWSHOUR/SHOW/MOUNTAINTOP-MINING-AFFECTS-LIFE-LANDSCAPE-WEST-VIRGINIA](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/mountaintop-mining-affects-life-landscape-west-virginia)

lasting result is that the local population, who at times has had little say in the operation of the mines, will be left to live in a region that is extremely damaged and potentially toxic.

## PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

International organizations, including UNEP and the FAO, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights groups, have worked to bring awareness to the human rights abuses that the vulnerable populations face. Survival International has been very active in the Amazon. In the case of the Awa tribe, the NGOs' campaigns were successful in stopping the illegal logging industry in that area. Despite these efforts, the Brazilian government and other South American countries have struggled to end illegal logging because of the corruption throughout the industry. This case illustrates why it is essential that coordination be achieved at the national and international level.

The United Nations has created programs such as the UN-REDD Programme to provide a venue for meetings including an emphasis on including indigenous people, as well as scientific and economic resources for states to protect their forests.<sup>19</sup> UNEP has focused on numerous actions to protect ecosystems around the world and prompt the sustainable production and consumption of materials. They have had numerous meetings that focus on issues ranging from addressing capacity building to enable developing states to withstand the negative impacts of logging, mining and air and water pollution. For example, they have focused on providing Member States with incentives and resources to end the illegal trade of timber.

At the same time, specific focus on protecting and promoting the vulnerable is an essential project for the United Nations as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. In

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<sup>19</sup> UN-REDD PROGRAMME, 2018, ABOUT REDD+, [HTTPS://WWW.UNREDD.NET/ABOUT/WHAT-IS-REDD-PLUS.HTML](https://www.unredd.net/about/what-is-redd-plus.html) [ACCESSED SEPTEMBER 9, 2018].

addition, at the international level in March 2008, the UN created the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, recognizing their right to their land, territories, and resources. In the document the UN notes the history of injustices as a result of colonization and unfair dispossession of lands, preventing them from exercising their right to development aligned with their own needs and interests<sup>20</sup>. Although many states agreed with the resolution, the monetary benefits from corporate developments are immense. Member States are slow to act against people displacing indigenous people for profit, implicating themselves in the exploitation.

At the local level, vulnerable groups have come together to create a united stand and give themselves a voice. For example, in 2016 50 indigenous tribes across North America signed the Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion to put a stop against oil mining expansion across Canada and the US<sup>21</sup>. Regionally, the Arctic Council includes membership from six indigenous groups from the Arctic littoral states. These groups have been vocal advocates for minimizing the exploitation of oil, gas and minerals from beneath the Arctic floor.<sup>22</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Due to the mass consumption of resources, it is imperative that a voice is given to vulnerable populations. The exploitation of natural resources leading to the displacement of people and contamination of the environment is damaging communities and requires international actions to prevent or minimize its impact. Member States must ensure that vulnerable populations are thoroughly educated about the health, environmental and economic impacts on their communities, and given as noted in the High-Level forum “access to education, adequate housing, basic services, social protection, jobs, financing, legal protection, protection

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<sup>20</sup> UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. (N.D.). UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTPS://WWW.UN.ORG/ESA/SOCDEV/UNPFII/DOCUMENTS/DRIPS\\_EN.PDF](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_EN.PDF)

<sup>21</sup> (TREATY ALLIANCE AGAINST TAR SANDS EXPANSION, 2015)

<sup>22</sup> ARTIC COUNCIL, AC WORKING GROUP: PROTECTION OF THE ARCTIC MARINE ENVIRONMENT, [HTTPS://OARCHIVE.ARCTIC-COUNCIL.ORG/HANDLE/11374/52](https://oarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/52) [ACCESSED SEPTEMBER 29, 2018].

from environmental hazards and natural disasters, and opportunities to participate in decision-making.”<sup>23</sup>

Natural resource extraction is the foundation of capital accumulation, state power, and environmental degradation. A UN report notes the “depletion of renewable resources can destabilize livelihoods, negatively affect ecosystems and undermine peace and development”<sup>24</sup>. The ability to control and use these resources has a growing impact on shaping the local, regional and global distribution of power. Member States should work to end illegal and unsustainable extraction in order to promote ethical and sustainable practices. It is undeniable the power that natural resources hold, but just as strongly it is imperative that sustainable and ethical practices be put in place to ensure the future of our environment and all communities.

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<sup>23</sup> UNITED NATIONS, DIVISION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, UN-DESA, 2016, ENSURING THAT NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND: REACHING THE MOST VULNERABLE.

<sup>24</sup>UNITED NATIONS. (N.D.). TOOLKIT AND GUIDANCE FOR PREVENTING AND MANAGING LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCE CONFLICT. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/EN/LAND-NATURAL-RESOURCES-CONFLICT/PDFS/EU-UN%20INTRODUCTION%20AND%20OVERVIEW.PDF](http://www.un.org/en/land-natural-resources-conflict/pdfs/eu-un%20introduction%20and%20overview.pdf)

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What natural resources are the most used/ extracted from your state?
2. What vulnerable populations exist within your state?
3. What is your state's position on the Sustainable Development Goals and are they active in promoting these goals internationally and at home?
4. Has your state participated in UN activities to protect and promote vulnerable populations?  
Does it consider this an important or insignificant issue?
5. What impact does natural resource extraction have on the stability of your region?

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## ADDRESSING AIR POLLUTION IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL THREE

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY ISSUES BOOK  
JACEN MILLER – WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

In 2015 the Member States of the United Nations agreed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and set seventeen ambitious goals. In particular, Goal #3 Good Health and Well-being is extremely important as “Ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being at all ages is essential to sustainable development.” Within this Goal is the target: “By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.”<sup>1</sup> However, reaching this target by 2030 seems insurmountable as the World Health Organization reports that there are “4.2 million deaths every year as a result of exposure to ambient (outdoor) air pollution” and “3.8 million deaths every year as a result of household exposure to smoke from dirty cookstoves and fuels.”<sup>2</sup> Eight million deaths from air pollution that could be prevented. While the United Nations and many Member States have taken numerous actions to reduce air pollution, the results have clearly not been enough. To reach Goal #3 much more action must be taken as soon as possible.

In 1157, what was perhaps the first documented case of indoor air pollution occurred in England at Tutbury castle. Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry II’s wife, had to flee the castle from “unendurable” air pollution from wood smoke. A century later, Queen Eleanor of Provence was forced to leave Nottingham castle to Tutbury Castle because of heavy coal smoke in the air.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> THE UNITED NATIONS, “GOAL 3: ENSURE HEALTHY LIVES AND PROMOTE WELL-BEING FALL ALL AT ALL AGES” [HTTPS://WWW.UN.ORG/SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPMENT/HEALTH/](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/). WEB. 10 AUGUST, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, “AIR POLLUTION” [HTTPS://WWW.WHO.INT/AIRPOLLUTION/EN/](https://www.who.int/airpollution/en/) WEB. 10 AUGUST 2018.

<sup>3</sup> KOVARIK, BILL. “AIR POLLUTION.” ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY TIMELINE, 3 OCT. 2017, [ENVIRONMENTALHISTORY.ORG/ABOUT/AIRPOLLUTION/](http://environmentalhistory.org/about/airpollution/). WEB. 15 AUGUST, 2018

There are several different types of air pollution, for example carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), lead (Pb), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), particles (see below), smog, soot, carcinogens, and sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). More recently Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and heavy metals such as Mercury (Hg) have been added to the list. Air quality is measured by looking at the type(s) of pollutant present which can vary by region, type and source. For example, air quality could be judged by looking at the fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) level, or by measuring ground level ozone amounts. High concentrations of PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels are found within in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Some of the countries have high PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels because of a natural source such as windblown mineral dust, but many others are a result from toxic energy sources. Highest levels of ozone are found in the US and South and East Asia.<sup>4</sup> All of these pollutants can have a devastating effect on any human health:

Soot can penetrate lungs and the bloodstream and worsen bronchitis, lead to heart attacks, and even hasten death. . . . Smog can irritate the eyes, throat, and damage the lungs. Carcinogens cause eye, skin, and lung irritation in the short term and blood disorders in the long term. . . . Dioxins affect the liver in the short term and harm the immune, nervous, and endocrine systems, as well as reproductive functions. . . . Lead in large amounts can damage children's brains and kidneys, and even in small amounts can affect children's IQ and ability to learn.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, the threat of air pollution is worldwide. Almost two dozen countries in Africa have over ninety percent of their populations exposed to household air pollutants.<sup>6</sup> This problem however does not just affect developing states but developed states as well. In the United Kingdom, 4.5 million children have been exposed to hazardous levels of air pollution. Walking on busy roads exposes children to higher concentrations of air pollution because of their height

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<sup>4</sup> HEALTH EFFECTS INSTITUTE - STATE OF GLOBAL AIR, "WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF AIR QUALITY AROUND THE WORLD?", 21 MAY 2018, [WWW.STATEOFGLOBALAIR.ORG/AIR/CURRENT](http://WWW.STATEOFGLOBALAIR.ORG/AIR/CURRENT). WEB. 6 AUG. 2018.

<sup>5</sup> MACKENZIE, JILLIAN. "AIR POLLUTION: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW." NRDC, [WWW.NRDC.ORG/STORIES/AIR-POLLUTION-EVERYTHING-YOU-NEED-KNOW#SEC1](http://WWW.NRDC.ORG/STORIES/AIR-POLLUTION-EVERYTHING-YOU-NEED-KNOW#SEC1). WEB. 6 AUG. 2018.

<sup>6</sup> HEALTH EFFECTS INSTITUTE.

that places them closer to car exhausts. A UNICEF report found that “almost a third of under-18s live in places with unsafe levels of small particulate pollution, including 1.6 million under-fives and 270,000 babies.”<sup>7</sup>

Some large cities are notorious for their extreme levels of air pollution. In late March 2018, Beijing’s air quality returned to hazardous levels. Citizens have had to wear masks and scarves to protect themselves from the toxic air. The fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) concentration was reported to be almost ten times the amount of PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration that is deemed unhealthy by the World Health Organization. A sandstorm tipped the scales, filling the air with additional toxins and further diminishing the air quality across the city/nation. Natural disasters are dangerous but combined with polluted air or pollutants of any kind will make it catastrophic.<sup>8</sup>

Mexico City has struggled to provide clean air to its citizens. Moving factories out of cities and stricter regulations on fuel and cars have been positive changes for the residents. However, despite these efforts Mexico City is still producing a dangerous amount of carbon emissions. In 2018, researchers found an increased chance of Alzheimer’s disease and suicide in those exposed to the current level of air pollution in Mexico City.<sup>9</sup>

## SOURCES AND TRANSBOUNDARY POLLUTION

There are four categories of air pollution sources. These sources are “mobile, stationary, area and natural sources.” The mobile sources are “cars, buses, planes and trains.” Stationary sources may include “power plants, oil refineries, industrial facilities, and factories.” Area

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<sup>7</sup> CARRINGTON, DAMIAN. “MILLIONS OF BRITISH CHILDREN BREATHING TOXIC AIR, UNICEF WARNS.” THE GUARDIAN, GUARDIAN NEWS AND MEDIA, 21 JUNE 2018, [WWW.THEGUARDIAN.COM/ENVIRONMENT/2018/JUN/21/MILLIONS-OF-BRITISH-CHILDREN-BREATHING-TOXIC-AIR-UNICEF-WARNS](http://WWW.THEGUARDIAN.COM/ENVIRONMENT/2018/JUN/21/MILLIONS-OF-BRITISH-CHILDREN-BREATHING-TOXIC-AIR-UNICEF-WARNS). WEB. 6 AUG. 2018.

<sup>8</sup> ZUO, MANDY. “SANDSTORM AND SMOG COMBINE TO TURN BEIJING’S AIR HAZARDOUS.” SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST, SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST, 28 MAR. 2018, [WWW.SCMP.COM/NEWS/CHINA/SOCIETY/ARTICLE/2139244/BEIJING-AIR-QUALITY-RETURNS-HAZARDOUS-LEVELS-SANDSTORMS-AND-SMOG](http://WWW.SCMP.COM/NEWS/CHINA/SOCIETY/ARTICLE/2139244/BEIJING-AIR-QUALITY-RETURNS-HAZARDOUS-LEVELS-SANDSTORMS-AND-SMOG). WEB. 6 AUG. 2018.

<sup>9</sup> NATALIE SCHACHAR. “MEXICO CITY TRIES NEW TACTICS AGAINST AN OLD ENEMY: SMOG.” CITYLAB, 2 MAY 2018, [WWW.CITYLAB.COM/ENVIRONMENT/2018/05/MEXICO-CITY-LOOKS-FOR-NEW-WAYS-TO-TAME-AIR-POLLUTION/558698/](http://WWW.CITYLAB.COM/ENVIRONMENT/2018/05/MEXICO-CITY-LOOKS-FOR-NEW-WAYS-TO-TAME-AIR-POLLUTION/558698/).

sources are “agricultural areas, cities, and wood burning fireplaces.” Finally, the last sources are natural sources such as “wind-blown dust, wildfires, and volcanoes.”<sup>10</sup> The three sources that need to be addressed are mobile, stationary, and area. All of these are human-made and greatly increase ambient and indoor air pollution.

In addition, air pollution is a unique problem as it is a “transboundary” issue. While it seems humorous to say so, the earth’s atmosphere is not bound by one state. What one state sends up into the atmosphere can cross a border and pollute another state. One state may emit the pollutant (such as a power plant in the Northeast of the United States) which is then picked up by the wind and carried to Canada. In fact, this occurrence led to the United States and Canada signing the Canada-United States Air Quality Agreement in 1991 to reduce Sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, air pollution is a classic “common property” problem. Garrett Hardin in his famous “The Tragedy of the Commons” explains how farmers living along a commonly shared pasture will add more and more cattle to the meadow to graze as it will benefit them (more cattle equals more revenue). However, the pasture has a finite amount of grass and eventually the pasture will cease to have grass due to overgrazing. The earth’s atmosphere is a similar situation. We all, in our daily life and our drive for economic development, are “overgrazing” the atmosphere by adding more and more pollutants. We need to avoid the “tragedy” that Hardin predicts.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE, “WHERE DOES AIR POLLUTION COME FROM?” U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, [WWW.NPS.GOV/SUBJECTS/AIR/SOURCES.HTM](http://WWW.NPS.GOV/SUBJECTS/AIR/SOURCES.HTM). WEB. 6 AUG. 2018.

<sup>11</sup> GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, “CANADA-UNITED STATES AIR QUALITY AGREEMENT”, [HTTPS://WWW.CANADA.CA/EN/ENVIRONMENT-CLIMATE-CHANGE/SERVICES/AIR-POLLUTION/ISSUES/TRANSBOUNDARY/CANADA-UNITED-STATES-AIR-QUALITY-AGREEMENT-OVERVIEW.HTML](https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/air-pollution/issues/transboundary/canada-united-states-air-quality-agreement-overview.html) WEB. 6 AUG. 2018.

<sup>12</sup> GARRETT HARDIN, 1968 “THE TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS” [HTTPS://WWW.GARRETTHARDINSOCIETY.ORG/ARTICLES/ART\\_TRAGEDY\\_OF\\_THE\\_COMMONS.HTML](https://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art_tragedy_of_the_commons.html). WEB. 10 SEPT. 2018.

## ACTIONS TAKEN

In 1948, when the United Nations first established the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Body did not consider the effects of air pollution on the world. However, one could argue that clean air is an essential human right. Inadequate actions to eliminate air pollution may be a modern basis for the denial of basic human rights.

Many states have taken domestic actions to reduce air pollution. For example, Germany created numerous standards, laws and directives to improve air quality.<sup>13</sup> India has faced severe air pollution in its cities and has also created acts, rules and standards such as the 1981 “Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act.”<sup>14</sup> The United States created the Clean Air Act in 1975. The Act has been revised and renewed several times.<sup>15</sup> Each of these examples demonstrate that the will to reduce air pollution is present, and in most of these cases air pollution has been reduced. However, air pollution persists, and many Member States are unable to make the reductions that would insure this essential human right for all humankind.

Systematic international actions to address air pollution did not begin until the 1970s. In 1972 the first UN sponsored conference to address environmental issues was held (the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment - UNCHE).<sup>16</sup> While limited actions were taken by Members states based on the report of the conference (the United Nations Environment Programme was created at UNCHE), this conference was monumental in educating member states on the importance of confronting air pollution in the future. The follow up conference, the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED - also known as the

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<sup>13</sup> FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, NATURE CONSERVATION AND NUCLEAR SAFETY – GERMANY, “WHAT IS AIR POLLUTION CONTROL ABOUT?” [HTTPS://WWW.BMU.DE/EN/TOPICS/AIR-MOBILITY-NOISE/AIR-POLLUTION-CONTROL/GENERAL-INFORMATION/](https://www.bmu.de/en/topics/air-mobility-noise/air-pollution-control/general-information/). WEB. 10 SEPT. 2018.

<sup>14</sup> MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS GOVERNMENT OF INDIA – GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, “AIR POLLUTION” [HTTP://ENVFOR.NIC.IN/DIVISION/AIR-POLLUTION](http://envfor.nic.in/division/air-pollution). WEB. 10 SEPT. 2018.

<sup>15</sup> ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY – UNITED STATES, “SUMMARY OF THE CLEAN AIR ACT” [HTTPS://WWW.EPA.GOV/LAWS-REGULATIONS/SUMMARY-CLEAN-AIR-ACT](https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-air-act). WEB. 10 SEPT. 2018.

<sup>16</sup> UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, [HTTP://WWW.UN.ORG/GA/SEARCH/VIEW\\_DOC.ASP?SYMBOL=A/CONF.48/14/REV.1](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/CONF.48/14/REV.1) WEB. 10 SEPT. 2018.

Earth Summit or the Rio Summit) was held in 1982 in Rio de Janeiro. Similar to the 1972 conference, UNCED produced several documents that reiterated the need to take actions to reduce air pollution. A side conference was held as well that produce the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This treaty has led to yearly meetings and incremental steps (such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that many categorize as a form of air pollution. It is important to recognize though that climate change and air pollution are interlinked but separate phenomenon.<sup>17</sup>

Since 1972, numerous conferences and meetings have been held which have led to agreements and treaties addressing particular sources of air pollution bilaterally, regionally and internationally. In 1979, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe held a conference from which the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) was drafted. The treaty went into force in 1983 and has since been a significant factor in later treaties as well as concrete steps that European states have taken to reduce various types of air pollutants. Over time, eight additional treaties (protocols) have been adopted that address emissions of Sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxides, heavy metals, VOCs, POPs and ground-level ozone.<sup>18</sup>

The Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer (came into force in 1988) and the Montreal Protocol (came into force in 1987) were designed for “eliminating the use of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS)” that destroy the ozone layer. All UN Members States have signed the Montreal Protocol. Ozone at ground-level is a damaging pollutant, however ozone in the stratosphere (one of the upper levels of the atmosphere) is essential as it blocks many of the sun’s harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. These rays reaching the earth’s surface can lead to “higher incidence of skin cancers and eye cataracts, more-compromised immune systems, and negative

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<sup>17</sup> DELEGATES SHOULD FOCUS ON ADDRESSING AIR POLLUTION AND NOT CLIMATE CHANGE DURING THE UPCOMING UNEA COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS AT MUNFW.

<sup>18</sup> UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE, “PROTOCOLS”  
[HTTPS://WWW.UNECE.ORG/ENV/LRTAP/STATUS/LRTAP\\_S.HTML](https://www.unece.org/env/lrtap/status/lrtap_s.html). WEB. 10 SEPT. 2018.

effects on watersheds, agricultural lands and forests.”<sup>19</sup> More recently calls have been made to create agreements to reduce mercury emissions into water, soil and air. Since 2006, the state of Oregon in the U.S. has been measuring mercury levels growing in its water sources (snowpack in the Cascades) due to coal power plants emitting mercury in China.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, the United Nations Environment Agency (UNEA) was created in 2012 as part of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20) as a means of strengthening the efforts of the United Nations Environment Programme to preserve and protect all aspects of the environment. Consequently, the UNEA has addressed air pollution at several of its recent sessions. For example, at its Third Session it produced Resolution 8 (UNEP/EA.3/Res.8) “Preventing and reducing air pollution improve air quality globally” that recalls previous actions (such as UNEP/EA.3/Res7) as well as setting numerous steps states could take to reduce air pollution.<sup>21</sup> The UNEA as a new forum for discussion may lead to more substantive efforts to reduce air pollution in the long term.

## CONCLUSION

Cities, regions, Member States and the international community have taken significant steps to reduce air pollution, but it is clear much more needs to be done. While international agreements are an important step to reducing air pollution, eventually change must take place at the local level to reduce emissions. How we live our lives must change, such as driving less, creating energy efficiency, eating less red meat, etc. Yet, the dilemma remains of how to affect

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<sup>19</sup> UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, “MONTREAL PROTOCOL” [HTTP://WWW.UNDP.ORG/CONTENT/UNDP/EN/HOME/SUSTAINABLE-DEVELOPMENT/ENVIRONMENT-AND-NATURAL-CAPITAL/MONTREAL-PROTOCOL.HTML](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development/environment-and-natural-capital/montreal-protocol.html). WEB. 10 SEPT. 2018.

<sup>20</sup> SHELBY WOOD, “CHINA’S MERCURY FLUSHES INTO OREGON’S RIVERS” NOVEMBER 24, 2006 THE OREGONIAN, [HTTPS://WWW.OREGONLIVE.COM/ENVIRONMENT/INDEX.SSF/2008/04/CHINAS\\_MERCURY\\_FLUSHES\\_INTO\\_OR.HT](https://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2008/04/chinas_mercury_flushes_into_or.html) ML. WEB. 10 SEPT. 2018.

<sup>21</sup> UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSEMBLY, “PREVENTING AND REDUCING AIR POLLUTION IMPROVE AIR QUALITY GLOBALLY”, UNEP/EA.3/RES.8, [HTTPS://PAPERSMART.UNON.ORG/RESOLUTION/UPLOADS/K1800222.ENGLISH.PDF](https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/uploads/K1800222.english.pdf). WEB 15. SEPT. 2018.

the sources of air pollution that are a necessary part of economic development. How much are we willing to change, or specifically what we need to give up in order to fulfill our commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals and protect human rights?

After the discussion on the dangers of air pollution and steps taken to combat it, what additional actions can and should be taken? Perhaps the world could call for more research on the negative effects of air pollution, as well as reducing its sources by finding alternative means of production (such as cleaner energy production and transportation, reorganize our food sources, etc.). Another solution may be educating communities on the effects of air pollution and how the average citizen can help reduce it would be imperative. Other steps could be to encourage further cooperation and partnership between Member States as to yield desired results. Research and development of new technology is also another path that might be taken. Our health and freedom from air pollution must be viewed as a human right. We must all make a commitment to reducing air pollution for our own sakes and the health of future generations.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What types of air pollution does your state produce? What are the sources of this pollution?
2. What international agreements has your state joined that address air pollution? Does your state have any other types of agreements to reduce air pollution such as regionally? If so, what measures do these agreements establish? Have they been effective?
3. Has your state introduced national laws or actions to reduce air pollution? Are they effective? Why or why not?
4. How much does your economy rely on activities (such as industry, transportation, agriculture) that produce air pollution? Do you have the financial resources to change? How willing is your government and your people to change?

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# UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

## 69TH SESSION ISSUES BOOK

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IMPLEMENTING THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES

COUNTERING XENOPHOBIA AND STRENGTHENING REFUGEE POPULATIONS

ADDRESSING STATELESSNESS



MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST  
69TH SESSION



# MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

## 69TH ANNUAL SESSION

### OUR COMMON HUMANITY: BACK TO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE UN CHARTER

UNHCR'S PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS ARE TO PROTECT AND ASSIST REFUGEES AND OTHER PERSONS OF CONCERN, INCLUDING STATELESS PEOPLE, AND TO SEEK DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THEM. PROTECTION INCLUDES PREVENTING THE INVOLUNTARY RETURN OF A REFUGEE OR A PERSON OF CONCERN TO A COUNTRY WHERE HE OR SHE MAY HAVE A WELL-FOUNDED FEAR OF PERSECUTION AND SUPPORTING HOST COUNTRIES IN ENSURING THAT THE TREATMENT OF REFUGEES IS IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS.

UNHCR HELPS REFUGEES WHO WISH TO GO HOME TO DO SO IF CONDITIONS BECOME CONDUCIVE, ASSISTING THEM TO REINTEGRATE INTO THEIR HOME COMMUNITIES. EMERGENCY AND OTHER MATERIAL ASSISTANCE IS PROVIDED IN COLLABORATION WITH GOVERNMENTAL, INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS IN THE FORM OF FOOD, SHELTER, MEDICAL AID, EDUCATION AND OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES.

UNHCR'S GOVERNING BODY, THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME (EXCOM), DETERMINES THE GENERAL POLICIES UNDER WHICH UNHCR PLANS, DEVELOPS AND ADMINISTERS REFUGEE PROGRAMMES AND OPERATIONS AROUND THE WORLD. NEW MEMBERS MAY BE ADMITTED BY ECOSOC THROUGH THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. (UN HANDBOOK, 2017-18)

THE UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY  
THE STUDENTS OF WHITTIER COLLEGE FOR THE 69TH SESSION OF MODEL  
UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

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## IMPLEMENTING THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK  
PIPER LOWINGER – WHITTIER COLLEGE

UNHCR (the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or “the Refugee Agency”) defines a refugee as someone who “is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”<sup>1</sup>

UNHCR was established in 1950 through a Statute adopted by the General Assembly (A/RES/428 (V)) on 14 December. The Office is governed by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, which lay out UNHCR’s mandate and the role of its High Commissioner (currently Filippo Grandi of Italy). The 1951 Convention was established to protect those who had become refugees in Europe following World War II, but new refugee flows from North Africa, Southeast Asia, and Hungary, among others, led to adoption of the 1967 Protocol, which removed both geographic and temporal limits that previously determined who qualified as a refugee. As a result of subsequent agreements such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention of 1969, the Cartagena Convention of 1984 (Latin America), and subsequent General Assembly resolutions or requests from major UN bodies, UNHCR’s mandate has been expanded to include internally displaced persons, with consent of the national government, and persons living in refugee- or IDP-like situations. UNHCR has also been tasked by the General Assembly to address Statelessness, based on the 1954 and 1961 Conventions Relating to Statelessness.

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<sup>1</sup>UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (2011). THE 1951 CONVENTION RELATING TO THE STATUS OF REFUGEES AND ITS 1967 PROTOCOL. [HTTP://WWW.UNHCR.ORG/ABOUT-US/BACKGROUND/4EC262DF9/1951-CONVENTION-RELATING-STATUS-REFUGEES-ITS-1967-PROTOCOL.HTML](http://www.unhcr.org/about-us/background/4ec262df9/1951-convention-relating-status-refugees-its-1967-protocol.html).

As a result, UNHCR has been providing assistance to over 11 million refugees, three million asylum-seekers, 39 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), four million returnees, and 2.7 million stateless persons as of the end of 2017. While originally envisioned as a legal protection agency, UNHCR now offers humanitarian assistance in the field including the provision of food, water, sanitation, medical and psychosocial services, education, and livelihood training and opportunities, paying special attention to those most vulnerable – women, girls, the elderly, and the disabled.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, UNHCR works with sister agencies such as UNICEF and World Food Programme, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC and IFRC), and over 600 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Office also works with governments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank to encourage the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in long-term development planning in keeping with the emphasis on the need for a humanitarian-development nexus, the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals, and what the UN refers to as a New Way of Working (NWoW).

UNHCR collaborates with host countries and countries of origin to try and promote long-term solutions for refugees—either voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity (the preferred solution), local integration in the host country, or resettlement in a third country. In addition, UNHCR works with governments to promote legislation supportive of refugees, IDPs, and stateless persons and to develop fair reception and registration processes, protect the rights of persons of concern, and provide them with appropriate documentation.<sup>3</sup> At the heart of this effort is the need to uphold the principle of non-refoulement; according to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, people seeking refugee status may not be returned to a country where they may be subject to persecution.

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<sup>2</sup>SUHRKE, A. (1994). RESPONDING TO GLOBAL REFUGEE PROBLEMS: THE ROLE OF UNHCR. IN DEFENSE OF THE ALIEN, 17, 117-123.

<sup>3</sup>IBID.



To address the needs of over 50 million people of concern to the Office, UNHCR's needs-based budget for 2017 was \$7.96 billion; however, it received only \$4.08 billion. The United Nations regular budget provides less than two percent of this total; the remainder comes from voluntary contributions from Member States (approximately 90 percent), other international bodies, or the private sector. The number of refugees and IDPs has been increasing steadily in recent years as the result of conflict, human rights abuses, natural disasters, climate change, food insecurity, and environmental degradation. UNHCR estimates that 16.2 million people were newly displaced in 2017; on average one person is forcibly displaced every two seconds. Though a majority of refugees actually live in urban areas with friends, relatives, or on their own, many refugees and IDPs who live in camps are in what are called protracted situations, with the average length of stay estimated to be at least 17 years.

## IMPACT ON HOST COUNTRIES

Though until recently developed states such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and members of the European Union (EU) have admitted larger volumes of refugees, a majority of refugees from the Middle East, North African regions, and Asia seek asylum and safety in neighboring countries that share land or maritime borders. More than 80 percent of the world's refugees live in developing countries, such as South Sudan, Chad, Uganda, Niger, Lebanon, and Rwanda. In 2011 the World Bank identified two major trends associated with the refugee situation: (1) neighboring countries that host refugees are often categorized as non-fragile, non-OECD lower- or middle-income nations, and (2) host countries experience a series of long term economic, social, political, and environmental consequences, which often

compound existing national issues of economic instability or subnational conflicts, the latter being especially relevant in India, Pakistan, Chad, Yemen, Sudan, and Thailand.<sup>4</sup>

From the moment a refugee enters an asylum country categorized by a lower- or middle-income status, competition with citizens for already scarce resources, such as food, water, and health care, increases dramatically. Changes in the environment are often the first indicators of stress on a home country, including deforestation, soil degradation, and water pollution. Access to clean water is restricted by inadequate sanitation infrastructure and open defecation, both of which contribute to the spread of diseases among refugees in camps and slums.<sup>5</sup> Economic, social, and political issues follow shortly after natural resources are depleted.

Rural areas may experience an array of positive effects from an influx of refugees. Local farmers will double the size of their cultivated land to meet a higher demand for their goods, refugees become a source of cheap labor in various sectors including agriculture, and local entrepreneurs are able to capitalize on the process and achieve new levels of economic development for the area.<sup>6</sup> Urban economies are arguably more susceptible to being affected by negative consequences. According to a UNHCR study, growing urbanization since 2008 has contributed to an urban refugee population that accounts for nearly half of the total global refugee population. Already densely populated areas devolve into dilapidated environments where limited urban resources such as land, water, and safe labor opportunities become increasingly scarce.

In addition to economic exhaustion, existing socio-cultural differences between ethnic groups can become stress points when they are forced together. For example, inequalities between refugees and non-refugees may become more apparent when resources are made

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<sup>4</sup>WORLD BANK. WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2011: THE IMPACTS OF REFUGEES ON NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. 29 JULY 2010.

<sup>5</sup>MARTIN, A. (2005). ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT BETWEEN REFUGEE AND HOST COMMUNITIES. JOURNAL OF PEACE RESEARCH, 42(3), 329-346.

<sup>6</sup>WORLD BANK. WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2011: THE IMPACTS OF REFUGEES ON NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. 29 JULY 2010.

available only to the former.<sup>7</sup> In this regard, refugee status creates opportunities to receive health care, vocational training, and an education. In an effort to decrease the potential for social unrest, this inequality must be leveled by assistance programs that prioritize making resources available to the community of refugees and non-refugees alike. Ramifications linked to the influx of refugees can also destabilize host countries through the spread of rebel social networks and the diffusion of violence, the dissemination of arms and ideas conducive to combat, and the onset of tension between countries.<sup>8</sup>

## ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS

In September of 2016 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and set in motion a new commitment to protecting displaced persons. The New York Declaration is based on the idea that the refugee crisis is a complex international responsibility that must be shared equitably amongst supporting and host countries.<sup>9</sup> The Declaration established a framework for an international system of cooperation that, if wholly supported by Member States, may become a powerful tool in developing lasting and viable solutions.

The Global Compact on Refugees is to the New York Declaration what the 1967 Protocol was to the 1951 Convention.<sup>10</sup> Under the jurisdiction of UNHCR, the Compact will further the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) as an instrument to strengthen the

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<sup>7</sup>BLACK, R. (2001). FIFTY YEARS OF REFUGEE STUDIES: FROM THEORY TO POLICY. THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION REVIEW, 35(1), 57-78.

<sup>8</sup>WORLD BANK. WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2011: THE IMPACTS OF REFUGEES ON NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. 29 JULY 2010.

<sup>9</sup>CUNY, F. (1981). THE UNHCR AND RELIEF OPERATIONS: A CHANGING ROLE. THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION REVIEW, 15(1/2), 16-19.

<sup>10</sup>THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES IS BASED LARGELY ON THE 2016 NEW YORK DECLARATION FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS AND ITS ANNEX ON THE COMPREHENSIVE REFUGEE RESPONSE FRAMEWORK (CRRF). THE COMPACT WAS NEGOTIATED IN GENEVA DURING SUMMER 2018. WHILE IT IS NOT YET OFFICIAL AS OF THE DATE THIS PAPER GOES ON LINE, THE COMPACT WILL BE ADOPTED BY THE GA'S THIRD COMMITTEE IN THE FIRST WEEK OF NOVEMBER 2018 UNDER UNHCR'S AGENDA ITEM, AND THEN BY THE GA PLENARY SOMETIME IN DECEMBER 2018. THE COMMENTS IN THIS PAPER ASSUME THAT ADOPTION WILL OCCUR BY CONSENSUS AND, SINCE IT ALREADY HAS BEEN AGREED TO BY CONSENSUS IN GENEVA AND SINCE UNHCR'S RESOLUTION IS ALWAYS ADOPTED BY CONSENSUS, THE PAPER ASSUMES THERE WILL BE NO CHANGES IN THE DOCUMENT. (SOURCE: BRIEFING BY MR. VOLKER TURK, ASSISTANT HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES TO MEMBER STATES, 17 JULY 2018, NEW YORK).

international response to large-scale, protracted refugee situations. The Compact, while not legally binding for Member States, is structured around a proposed shared responsibility and is designed to: “(i) ease pressures on host countries; (ii) enhance refugee self-reliance; (iii) expand access to third country solutions; and (iv) support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.”<sup>11</sup> Assistance programs must address more than what is outlined in the definition of a refugee by promoting gender equality, empowering women and girls, preventing gender-based violence, catering to the needs of older persons and persons affected by disabilities, and encouraging tolerance.

## STRATEGIES FOR BURDEN AND RESPONSIBILITY SHARING: PART A

The international community has a responsibility to care for and protect populations at risk, as well as support countries that are hosting them. A lower- or middle-income country’s already limited resources are exhausted by the strain of hosting refugees. The Compact outlines a framework for creating mechanisms to lighten the burden on host countries through responsibility sharing and greater international cooperation. Strategies proposed by the Compact include establishing a Global Refugee Forum, national arrangements, Support Platforms, and regional and sub-regional approaches.

The Global Refugee Forum, which will occur every four years, will serve as a platform for Member States to exchange information, share experiences related to assisting refugees, and announce monetary, material, or technical contributions to relief efforts.<sup>12</sup> In this regard, the Forum will become both a proponent for transparency and an instrument of accountability. A national arrangement is a more direct line of communication in which UNHCR partners with

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<sup>11</sup>UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR), GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 7, 4 JUNE 2018. (HEREAFTER REFERENCED AS THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES)

<sup>12</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPHS 17-19, 4 JUNE 2018.

host countries and relevant stakeholders to draft a comprehensive plan that details necessary policies and requirements to send and receive support.<sup>13</sup> Support Platforms are mechanisms that bring negotiations and national arrangements to fruition. These context-specific strategies should galvanize political commitment to mobilize assistance in accord with the conditions of the comprehensive plan. UNHCR authorizes the activation of Support Platforms if one of the following criteria is met: (1) assistance is requested to resolve a large-scale refugee situation where the capabilities of the host country are overwhelmed or (2) the refugee situation becomes protracted and additional support is required to provide for the displaced persons until a solution emerges.<sup>14</sup> Once a Support Platform is activated, its objectives can be applied to regional and subregional approaches.

Actualizing burden and responsibility sharing is an impossible feat without adequate funding and international support. Pooling funds and resources efficiently, encouraging partnerships between stakeholders, and compiling data and evidence are all important components in actualizing an interconnected network of support for refugees.<sup>15</sup> Large-scale refugee situations are becoming increasingly complex, and, since traditional sources of funding are overwhelmed, alternative sources of funding will have to be relied upon to make up the difference.<sup>16</sup> For example, the Compact encourages Member States to draft legislation and policies in order to promote self-watchdog accountability. The Compact also invites the private sector to explore investment possibilities that would strengthen host communities, such as developing innovative technologies and renewable energies in affected areas, establishing

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<sup>13</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPHS 20 AND 21, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>14</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPHS 23-27, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>15</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPHS 32-48, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>16</sup>ROPER, S., & BARRIA, L. (2010). BURDEN SHARING IN THE FUNDING OF THE UNHCR: REFUGEE PROTECTION AS AN IMPURE PUBLIC GOOD. *THE JOURNAL OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION*, 54(4), 616-637.

programs to empower women and girls, and providing communities with access to information and data.<sup>17</sup>

Multi-stakeholder and partnership approaches are the most interconnected support systems proposed by the Compact. In this strategy, the United Nations system should engage all necessary bodies, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and the United Nations Country Team, to coordinate operations between national administrations and ground efforts.<sup>18</sup> Local authorities are not only the first to directly respond to the influx of refugees, but their communities are also the ones that are immediately affected by protracted and large-scale situations.<sup>19</sup> The role of UNHCR is to encourage communication between international, national, and local actors to increase funding in support of local authorities and communities during and after their time as hosts. The Compact stresses the importance of data and information sharing between actors, especially in the context of a smaller scale amongst networks of municipalities and local governments. Just as sources of funding are becoming more diverse, so too must the supporting groups. Faith-based actors and civil society organizations, though their current contributions are small compared to the large-scale need, could fulfill important roles in conflict prevention, reconciliation, establishing safe pathways, and voluntary repatriation.<sup>20</sup>

## A GUIDE TO SUPPORTING HOST COUNTRIES: PART B

In addition to relieving host countries of their burdens, humanitarian organizations and States will also contribute resources to empower refugees during every stage of the relocation and resettlement process. The measures in Part B will “take into account, meaningfully engage and seek input from those with diverse needs and potential vulnerabilities, including women and

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<sup>17</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 32, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>18</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 36, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>19</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 37, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>20</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 41 AND 42, 4 JUNE 2018.

girls; children and youth; persons belonging to minorities; survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, or trafficking; older persons; and persons with disabilities.”<sup>21</sup> Priority should be given to the following areas in need of support: reception and admission, meeting needs and supporting communities, and solutions.

Host communities are more vulnerable without comprehensive responses such as early warning systems, preparedness, and contingency planning. In keeping with the principles of the CRRF, the international community may contribute resources and expertise to prepare host communities for reception and admission of refugees.<sup>22</sup> Measures may include efforts to forecast future refugee movements, share reliable information about the needs of displaced persons, and provide assistance in the form of trained personnel and survival packages transported by national delivery systems when appropriate.<sup>23</sup> The resources and expertise contributed by UNHCR will be utilized to establish safe reception areas that accommodate persons of various ages, genders, and disabilities. The purpose of implementing safety and security measures for both refugees and host communities at the request of host countries will be to curb sexual and gender-based violence and human trafficking, identify and separate combatants from the refugee community, and instill safeguards to protect international human rights.<sup>24</sup>

Adhering to group-based protection standards will minimize security and safety inconsistencies. Under the supervision of UNHCR, the Asylum Capacity Support Group will document context-specific refugee protection needs and will organize contributions pledged during the Global Refugee Forums. The Asylum Capacity Support Group will oversee the development of a more effective and thorough registration and documentation process that will use biometric technologies to: (1) revolutionize identification systems, (2) prevent fraud,

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<sup>21</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 51, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>22</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 52, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>23</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 53, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>24</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 57, 4 JUNE 2018.

corruption, and crime, and (3) streamline efforts to provide assistance to individuals with special needs, such as unaccompanied children, women who are victims of gender-based violence, trauma survivors, and persons with disabilities.<sup>25</sup>

## AREAS IN NEED OF SUPPORT

Protracted refugee situations require more substantial and far-reaching assistance. While providing displaced persons with clean drinking water, food, and shelter remains a priority for humanitarian efforts, host countries are in desperate need of assistance to create opportunities for education, jobs, healthcare, youth enrichment programs, and stable food security.

1. In regards to education, supporting countries may contribute funds or expertise to integrate refugee children into the national education system in an effort to: (1) shorten the amount of time refugee children spend out of school and (2) set them on a course to achieve higher education.<sup>26</sup> Relevant stakeholders can contribute to developing additional programs that empower young women and girls to circumvent gender-related barriers, increase female leadership in national organizations and bodies, enhance the quality of national health systems, and improve natural resource management in rural and urban areas where the influx of refugees threatens environmental degradation.<sup>27</sup>
2. Establishing a consistent supply of food assistance must also be prioritized. Supporting communities may contribute resources and expertise to meet the food needs sensitive to gender and age, create cash-based transfers or social protection systems, and develop nutritional programs in schools and civil organizations.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 62, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>26</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 68, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>27</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 69, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>28</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 71, 4 JUNE 2018.



3. Recognizing that statelessness may be a consequence of refugee movements, UNHCR also encourages greater participation by the international community, national governments, and local organizations in a shared effort to end statelessness.<sup>29</sup> (Please see attached brief addressing Statelessness.)
4. Opening labor markets and industries that can capitalize on skills refugees may possess will strengthen local economies and communities.

## SOLUTIONS

Voluntary repatriation is the preferred solution for a majority of refugee situations and can be assisted by State contributions to uphold the principles of non-refoulement, educate individuals so they may make informed decisions, and engage multiple stakeholders in developing safe and sustainable pathways for return.<sup>30</sup> Information and refugee documentation sharing will also be a useful tool for reintegrating displaced persons in their country of origin. All voluntary repatriation efforts should utilize regionally specific political and social mechanisms for coordinating humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development initiatives.

Resettlement is another proposed solution that directly addresses and fulfills the objective of burden and responsibility sharing. At the request of host countries, UNHCR will partner with relevant stakeholders using techniques derived from the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism (ERCM) to develop a three-year strategy that will enlarge resettlement operations, develop building and technology infrastructure in areas able to accommodate refugees, and streamline the resettlement process.<sup>31</sup> The Global Refugee Forum will serve as the primary platform where discussions between States and other actors in regards to resettlement operations,

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<sup>29</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 83, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>30</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPHS 87-89, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>31</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPH 91, 4 JUNE 2018.

security measures, and data sharing will occur. Proposed three-year strategies will also establish additional pathways for entry to third countries. These complementary pathways may include providing humanitarian visas for use in humanitarian admission programs as a means of registration and documentation, fostering collaboration between educational organizations and governments in order to create opportunities for refugees to receive scholarships and student visas, and enabling refugees through skill-building workshops and training programmes so they may participate in the labor market.<sup>32</sup>

The most immediate humanitarian efforts should be initiated at the regional and local levels. Local solutions that invest in integrating refugees can cause profound and positive change.<sup>33</sup> Encouraging peaceful coexistence between refugees and locals is important in creating an unbiased and nondiscriminatory community dynamic. Areas of focus for local initiatives may include proper documentation and registration, legal assistance for providing proper permits, language and vocational training, educational programmes for women and girls, and skills training to increase participation of refugees in various industries.<sup>34</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Negotiations on the Global Compact on Refugees were not without disagreements among member states. Questions were raised about whether to include references to internally displaced persons, about the relationship between this compact and the Global Compact on Migration, and about how frequently to hold the Global Refugee Forum, to name a few.

Addressing the needs of over 20 million refugees requires a commitment from all sides in a spirit of burden and responsibility-sharing. The international community must address the root

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<sup>32</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPHS 91-93, 4 JUNE 2018.

<sup>33</sup>ALLEN, R. (2009). BENEFIT OR BURDEN? SOCIAL CAPITAL, GENDER, AND THE ECONOMIC ADAPTATION OF REFUGEES. THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION REVIEW, 43(2), 332-365.

<sup>34</sup>GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES (GCR), PARAGRAPHS 97-100, 4 JUNE 2018.

causes that lead to displacement in the first place; host countries must continue to be open to those seeking refuge and facilitate humanitarian assistance where needed to promote resilience among refugees and solutions to their plight; donor countries must continue to support host countries and communities to promote preparedness for when refugee crises occur. The Global Compact on Refugees is an attempt to normalize these efforts. While not legally binding on governments, it does provide guidelines to facilitate a more effective, coordinated response to a major refugee influx.

In the view of UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner Volker Turk at his final briefing on the Compact to Member States in July, what must be done can be summed up in three words—"implementation, implementation, implementation." The major question before this body then is "What can member states do to facilitate implementation?"

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What specific strategies can States use to actualize the concepts of the Global Compact on Refugees?
2. What role does globalization play in responsibility sharing?
3. What measures should be implemented to enhance reliable data collection regarding refugees?
4. What is the impact, if any, of refugees on your country?
5. What measures has your country taken to address the refugee crisis?
6. Should the Global Compact on Refugees be expanded to include IDPs?
7. Do the Global Compacts on Refugees and on Migrants complement each other?
8. What distinctions should be made between refugees and migrants, if any?

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# COUNTERING XENOPHOBIA AND STRENGTHENING REFUGEE POPULATIONS

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK  
KELCEY NEGUS – WHITTIER COLLEGE

Refugees flee their homes due to fear of persecution and depend on the host nations that accept them to protect them. More often than not, these individuals face further persecution throughout the process and upon arrival. In a tumultuous world where fear of “the other” is becoming all too common, refugees face the growing issue of xenophobia. One 2015 report from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines xenophobia as, “attitudes, prejudices and behavior that reject, exclude and often vilify persons based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity.”<sup>1</sup> Refugees and asylum seekers may face “restricted access to asylum or negatively affect the quality of asylum...and [they] may be denied equal access to public services and become targets of racially motivated acts.”<sup>2</sup> Those being affected by xenophobic attitudes are refugees residing in both industrialized and developing nations. Asylum seekers and refugees are vulnerable to becoming scapegoats, especially during politically tumultuous times. To truly address this issue, it will take the cooperation and collaboration of all Member States, other international and regional organizations, as well as NGOs and community groups.

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<sup>1</sup> PROTECTION FROM XENOPHOBIA: AN EVALUATION OF UNHCR'S REGIONAL OFFICE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA'S XENOPHOBIA RELATED PROGRAMME WRITTEN BY: JEAN PIERRE MISAGO, IRIANN FREEMANTLE & LOREN B. LANDAU THE AFRICAN CENTRE FOR MIGRATION AND SOCIETY UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND, UNHCR, FEBRUARY 2015

<sup>2</sup>UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR), *COMBATING RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE THROUGH A STRATEGIC APPROACH*, DECEMBER 2009, AVAILABLE AT: [HTTP://WWW.REFWORLD.ORG/DOCID/4B30931D2.HTML](http://www.refworld.org/docid/4b30931d2.html)

## UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES RESPONSE

In cooperation with UNHCR, several Member States have launched creative awareness-raising campaigns to “roll back xenophobia.” UNHCR states that the Office has an “integral role to play in this regard and seeks to address public attitudes towards persons of concern in a more strategic manner.”<sup>3</sup> A 2009 UNHCR guidance paper, *Combating Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance through a Strategic Approach*, outlines how racial discrimination and the fear of other can negatively impact refugees and what the international community can do to create an effective solution. In the guidance paper, UNHCR outlined seven elements for a strategic approach to address xenophobia. They are as follows:

1. Monitoring signs of racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and tracking and reporting hate crimes;
2. Analyzing the underlying reasons for racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;
3. Assessing the manifestations of these phenomena and their impact on protection;
4. Understanding legal obligations to protect all individuals from racial discrimination and multiple forms of discrimination;
5. Engaging a network of diverse organizations and actors that implement complementary activities targeting different groups in society;
6. Including affected communities in the strategic approach;
7. Providing individual support to victims (including medical, psychological, or legal support).

Media and political dialogue should be closely monitored and incidents such as hate crimes should be reported to UNHCR. The greatest concern the agency has is for the protection of asylum seekers and refugees. Xenophobic attitudes can have real consequences such as restrictive asylum policies, including the creation of barriers to territories and procedures, increased use of detention, extended applications of the exclusion clauses, and potential denial of

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<sup>3</sup> UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR), COMBATING RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE THROUGH A STRATEGIC APPROACH, DECEMBER 2009.

citizenship.<sup>4</sup> Member States have a legal obligation to protect refugees from discrimination, particularly if they have ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

UNHCR is also finding hope for solutions in technology. In 2015, the UNHCR Innovation Service partnered with UN Global Pulse, the United Nations initiative for big data analytics, to find additional insights into the refugee situation in the Mediterranean region. Originally, the technology was being used to analyze Twitter data to identify patterns that could help provide insights into cross-border movements. Following the terrorist attacks in Munich, Paris, and Berlin, the technology was finding posts about negative sentiment towards refugees in other parts of the world. The team then ‘taught’ a machine to ‘learn’ how to read, compile, categorize and aggregate different types of Twitter posts, in different languages and across cities and to quantify both xenophobia and integration-friendly comments.<sup>5</sup>

## CASE STUDIES

The following are three case studies that will provide real examples of countries facing the challenge of xenophobia. While these are not the only cases of xenophobia in the world, they do offer insight into the issue.

### European Crisis

Large-scale and continued conflict has caused protracted displacement of millions of refugees, many of whom due to proximity are fleeing to European countries. There are a limited number of safe pathways, and many refugees are crossing the Mediterranean and tragically perishing along the way. According to UNHCR, domestic pressure is causing numerous

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<sup>4</sup> UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR), COMBATING RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE THROUGH A STRATEGIC APPROACH, DECEMBER 2009.

<sup>5</sup> [HTTP://WWW.UNHCR.ORG/INNOVATION/TEACHING-ROBOT-DETECT-XENOPHOBIA-ONLINE/](http://www.unhcr.org/innovation/teaching-robot-detect-xenophobia-online/)



European countries to respond by unilaterally imposing tighter legal and physical restrictions on access to their territory.<sup>6</sup> To improve the situation and prevent exclusion based on xenophobia, UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe is working with a range of organizations and partners, including the European Union and its agencies, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, other UN agencies, civil society and NGOs.<sup>7</sup>

The European Commission, the executive arm of the European Union, is taking steps to address racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance. The European Commission outlines the relevant legislation to combat xenophobia on their website. The first is the "Victims' Rights Directive" which establishes minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of all victims of crime. Another is the "Audiovisual Media Services Directive", banning incitement to hatred in audiovisual media services and the promotion of discrimination in audiovisual commercial communications.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most effective way to bring about change is to spark conversation. One documentary, *The Island of All Together*, does just this. The filmmakers invited European tourists and Syrian refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos to sit down and talk to each other. When people are given a chance to talk to each other, they connect.<sup>9</sup> The documentary was screened at an event at UN headquarters in New York on "Promoting Diversity and Combatting Xenophobia". Mr. Álvaro Mendonça e Moura, the Permanent Representative of Portugal, concluded the event by emphasizing that public awareness campaigns and increasing intercultural dialogue are imperative to promote tolerance and fight xenophobia. The involvement of civil society and municipalities is essential as well as recognizing that education

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<sup>6</sup> [HTTP://WWW.UNHCR.ORG/EN-US/EUROPE.HTML](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/europe.html)

<sup>7</sup> *IBID.*

<sup>8</sup> [HTTPS://EC.EUROPA.EU/INFO/POLICIES/JUSTICE-AND-FUNDAMENTAL-RIGHTS/COMBATTING-DISCRIMINATION/RACISM-AND XENOPHOBIA/COMBATING-RACISM-AND-XENOPHOBIA\\_EN](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-racism-and-xenophobia_en)

<sup>9</sup> TO WATCH THE SHORT DOCUMENTARY OR READ MORE ABOUT IT, GO TO:  
[HTTP://WWW.THEISLANDOFALLTOGETHER.COM/](http://www.theislandofalltogether.com/)

must be ensured, not just food and shelter. Having integrated societies is the only way to uphold human dignity.<sup>10</sup>

### USA Crisis

Economic downturn, rising unemployment and urbanization are all reasons animosity is fueled towards refugees.<sup>11</sup> One of the most common reasons for xenophobia in the United States is the fear of an increase in violence. The United States has a long history of excluding certain groups, with one of the most infamous policies perhaps being the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.<sup>12</sup> While the rhetoric has been geared more towards immigrants, refugees are also facing tighter restrictions from the United States. In 2016, the U.S. admitted almost 85,000 refugees, a number that declined to 45,000 refugees in 2017, the lowest number in a decade after an executive order reduced the cap on refugee admissions.<sup>13</sup> A common misconception is that refugees will bring crime with them. In reality, refugees are rarely, if ever, the reason behind an increase in crime. The New American Economy Research Fund used resettlement data from the US Department of State's Worldwide Refugee Processing System to calculate the 10 cities in the US that received the most refugees relative to the size of their population between 2006 and 2015. Cross-referencing these numbers with data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the results showed that "rather than crime increasing, nine out of 10 of the communities actually became considerably more safe, both in terms of their levels of violent and property crime."<sup>14</sup> The one city that did see an increase in crime is suffering from the far reaching opioid epidemic

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<sup>10</sup> NEGUS, KELCEY. NOTES FROM MEETING AT UN HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK, NEW YORK ON JULY 14, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR), COMBATING RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE THROUGH A STRATEGIC APPROACH, DECEMBER 2009.

<sup>12</sup> TO READ MORE ABOUT THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT OF 1882, GO TO:  
[HTTP://OCP.HUL.HARVARD.EDU/IMMIGRATION/EXCLUSION.HTML](http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/immigration/exclusion.html)

<sup>13</sup> [HTTPS://IMMIGRATIONFORUM.ORG/ARTICLE/FACT-SHEET-U-S-REFUGEE-RESETTLEMENT/](https://immigrationforum.org/article/fact-sheet-u-s-refugee-resettlement/)

<sup>14</sup> [HTTPS://RESEARCH.NEWAMERICANECONOMY.ORG/REPORT/IS-THERE-A-LINK-BETWEEN-REFUGEES-AND-U-S-CRIME-RATES/](https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/is-there-a-link-between-refugees-and-u-s-crime-rates/)

in the United States and the violence is thought to have been connected to gang-related activities, not refugees.

There have been recent reports that the US government is considering plans to admit no more than 25,000 refugees.<sup>15</sup> Some officials are wanting the numbers to be even lower. Stephen Miller, a senior adviser for the Trump administration would like to see the number cut to as low as 15,000.<sup>16</sup> This trend has caused worry among multiple UNHCR Officials in New York City, according to Dr. Mike McBride, a volunteer consultant with UNHCR. With 25.4 million refugees and 3.1 million asylum seekers, accepting limited numbers will place unnecessary burden on those seeking safety.

### South African Crisis

South Africa, one of the largest economies on the continent of Africa, borders Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Lesotho. Xenophobia has been a particular concern in South Africa following violent attacks on refugees in 2008 and 2015.<sup>17</sup> Refugees that are considered at risk are from Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Ethiopia, Burundi, Congo, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe.<sup>18</sup> According to a report evaluating the xenophobic related programs in Southern Africa, “xenophobia threatens the lives and livelihoods of refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and other locally defined ‘outsiders’ including domestic migrants and ethnic minorities.” UNHCR recognizes the risk that xenophobia poses to persons of concern, and the UNHCR Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA) has provided a number of recommendations:<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [HTTPS://WWW.NYTIMES.COM/2018/08/01/US/POLITICS/TRUMP-REFUGEES-REDUCTION.HTML](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/01/us/politics/trump-refugees-reduction.html)

<sup>16</sup> IBID.

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR MULLS SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES AFFECTED BY XENOPHOBIA - [HTTP://WWW.REFWORLD.ORG/COUNTRY,COI,UNHCR,,ZAF,,5566CD9C4,0.HTML](http://www.refworld.org/country/COI,UNHCR,,ZAF,,5566CD9C4,0.HTML)

<sup>18</sup> [HTTP://WWW.UNHCR.ORG/4DFDBF4C16.PDF](http://www.unhcr.org/4DFDBF4C16.PDF)

<sup>19</sup> PROTECTION FROM XENOPHOBIA: AN EVALUATION OF UNHCR'S REGIONAL OFFICE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA'S XENOPHOBIA RELATED PROGRAMME WRITTEN BY: JEAN PIERRE MISAGO, IRIANN FREEMANTLE & LOREN B.

1. The need for a revised and more relevant agency-wide strategy and guidance to address xenophobia in UNHCR's operational areas;
2. The creation of strategic advocacy platforms at both the headquarters and field level that exploit UNHCR's comparative advantage in social change and attract new partners with a mutual interest in combatting xenophobia;
3. Base xenophobia related programming on evidence-based understanding of current socio-political and socioeconomic conditions and theoretically sound and empirically supported behavioral change models;
4. Review results based management objectives, indicators, outputs and outcomes to realistically reflect xenophobia programming and enable better monitoring; and
5. Dedicate more oversight, training, human and financial resources to anti-xenophobia programming.

At a panel discussion on “Promoting Migrant Integration and Combating Xenophobia,” the Deputy Permanent Representative of South Africa stated that a real challenge the country is facing is when refugees enter the country and then disappear into the cities. Under the constitution, refugees have the right to housing and education and health – all the rights of a South African citizen except for the right to vote. However, it can be difficult to ensure these rights are being protected when individuals are hard to locate in urban settings.<sup>20</sup> The South African government intends to address xenophobia by introducing educational activities in schools and other centers to promote a better understanding of refugees, asylum-seekers and other foreign nationals.<sup>21</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The main concern that Member States should focus on is overcoming xenophobia. Member States have already acknowledged the need to address xenophobia in numerous resolutions. The General Assembly adopted resolution 72/150 on 19 December 2017, which

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LANDAU THE AFRICAN CENTRE FOR MIGRATION AND SOCIETY UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND, UNHCR, FEBRUARY 2015

<sup>20</sup> NEGUS, KELCEY. NOTES FROM MEETING AT UN HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK, NEW YORK ON JUNE 2, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR MULLS SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES AFFECTED BY XENOPHOBIA - [HTTP://WWW.REFWORLD.ORG/COUNTRY,COI,UNHCR,,ZAF,,5566CD9C4,0.HTML](http://www.refworld.org/country,COI,UNHCR,,ZAF,,5566CD9C4,0.HTML)[HTTP://WWW.REFWORLD.ORG/CO](http://www.refworld.org/country,COI,UNHCR,,ZAF,,5566CD9C4,0.HTML)

“strongly condemns attacks on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons and acts that pose a threat to their personal security and well-being, calls upon all States concerned and, where applicable, parties involved in an armed conflict to take all measures necessary to respect and ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and urges all States to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, related intolerance and hate speech.”<sup>22</sup>

The issue is not whether xenophobia needs to be opposed, but instead, there must be an agreement forged on *how* to oppose it. The recommendations provided by the Regional Office of Southern Africa could be a good starting point for other nations. In order to come to a solution, consider the questions below.

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<sup>22</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 72/150 “OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES”

## QUESTIONS FOR DELEGATES

1. What is the policy of your country on xenophobia?
2. What steps has your country taken, if any, to address xenophobia?
3. What role can Non-Governmental Organizations play?
4. What can the United Nations do to address xenophobia?
5. What elements should be included in a resolution that would produce lasting change?
6. How can we leverage technology to analyze data and create a counter-narrative for hate speech?

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<http://www.refworld.org/docid/4b30931d2.html>



# ADDRESSING STATELESSNESS

MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST - 69<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ISSUES BOOK  
MADISON WHITE – WHITTIER COLLEGE

## DEFINITIONS, MANDATES, AND NUMBERS

The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons defines a stateless person as “A person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.”<sup>1</sup> A stateless person, deprived of a nationality for a variety of reasons, faces many challenges. Those lacking a nationality are more vulnerable to systemic discrimination — they have limited access to education and healthcare, difficulty traveling, and are deprived of the privileges of citizenship like voting. There are at least 10 million<sup>2</sup> people worldwide who lack a nationality; they are stateless.

Following the 1954 Convention, the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which was enacted on December 13, 1975, sought to establish a framework for combating statelessness: “a body to which a person claiming the benefit of this Convention may apply for the examination of his claim and for assistance in presenting it to the proper authority.”<sup>3</sup> The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was designated as this body by General Assembly resolutions 3275 (XXIX) of December 10, 1974 and 31/36 of November 30, 1976. The Conventions are supported by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to a nationality.<sup>4</sup> However, this is not the reality for millions of stateless persons or the international community itself. The 1961

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<sup>1</sup> 1954 CONVENTION RELATING TO THE STATUS OF STATELESS PERSONS, ARTICLE 1, PARAGRAPH 1.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, ENDING STATELESSNESS.

<sup>3</sup> 1961 CONVENTION ON THE REDUCTION OF STATELESSNESS, ARTICLE 11.

<sup>4</sup> UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 10 DECEMBER 1948.

Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, in its effort to reduce statelessness, calls upon State Party to the Convention to provide citizenship to people born on their territory or who have resided in their territory for a specified period of time. But it is the States who determine the standards for granting nationality; the Convention sets out limits only where withdrawal of a nationality would result in a person becoming stateless.<sup>5</sup> The Convention also provides guidelines for granting citizenship to stateless children born in that country or when one or both parents are of the nationality of that country (Article 1-4); when statelessness has occurred due to a loss of or renunciation of a nationality (Articles 5-7); or deprivation of nationality (Article 8-9); or in cases of State succession or changes in territorial boundaries (Article 10).<sup>6</sup> While the country provides the national legislation governing the process of granting nationality and there are exceptions that could lead to a rejection of an application for citizenship status, the net result, if countries were to live up to the guidelines in the Convention, would be a reduction in statelessness. However, since fewer than half the Member States are parties to the Convention and while many who are not parties to it follow the guidelines, the lack of universal coverage and adherence means that many States do not contribute to a resolution of the problem.

There was a significant increase in accession to both the 1954 and 1961 Conventions in 2011 at the special High Commissioner's Dialogue on Stateless Persons to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention. Additional advocacy efforts include the 2014 #IBelong Campaign<sup>7</sup> to End Statelessness in 2014. Currently, there are 90 States party to the 1954 Convention, and 71 States party to the 1961 convention.<sup>8</sup> Prior to the campaign, those numbers were 41 and 17, respectively. GA resolution 50/152 of December 21, 1995, "entrusted UNHCR

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<sup>5</sup> "PREVENTING AND REDUCING STATELESSNESS," UNHCR PUBLICATION 2014, P. 6

<sup>6</sup> "PREVENTING AND REDUCING STATELESSNESS: THE 1961 CONVENTION ON THE REDUCTION OF STATELESSNESS," UNHCR PUBLICATION 2010, P. 3.

<sup>7</sup> THE #IBELONG CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED IN 2014, WITH THE HOPES OF ENDING STATELESSNESS BY 2024. AMONG THE GOALS OF THE CAMPAIGN ARE: FUNDRAISING, RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS, AND HELPING MEET THE GLOBAL ACTION PLAN TO END STATELESSNESS, WHICH LAUNCHED IN THE SAME YEAR.

<sup>8</sup> GA 73/12, PART 1, PG. 13

with a global mandate to identify, prevent, and reduce statelessness and protect stateless persons, specifically requesting that the Office ‘provide relevant technical and advisory services pertaining to the preparation and implementation of nationality legislation.’”<sup>9</sup> However, nationality and its’ requirements are an integral aspect of state sovereignty. Identification and prevention largely require Member States to invite UNHCR to advise on legislation and implementation of measures, with no obligation to take the advice after receiving it. Additionally, many Member States are not party to either of the Conventions even if they have supplementary regional treaties, such as the United States.

The scope of statelessness goes far beyond accession. UNHCR estimates that there were approximately 3.2 million documented stateless persons, and that there are probably closer to ten million stateless persons overall.<sup>10</sup> While the disparity is less than it has been in the past, as documentation practices become better and more coordinated the vast difference between recorded and estimated numbers reflects one of the major problems facing UNHCR and the international community—— the difficulty of determining who is stateless and documenting them. Some countries lack adequate documentation procedures; statelessness is often a byproduct of conflict and instability that puts additional stress on state services like documentation and increases the number of potential stateless persons. Additionally, some stateless persons are reluctant to engage with government or UN officials for fear of deportation. Because nationality and the criteria of citizenship is determined by the State, there is the added complication of legal issues regarding citizenship status that may lead to large numbers of former

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<sup>9</sup> QUOTED IN UNHCR'S PUBLICATION ON THE CONVENTION OF THE REDUCTION OF STATELESSNESS, FEBRUARY 2011, P. 4; GA RESOLUTION 50/152 OF DECEMBER 21 1995.

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, GLOBAL TRENDS 2017, STUDY RELEASED JUNE 19, 2017, PG. 2; SEE ALSO “PREVENTING AND REDUCING STATELESSNESS: THE 1961 CONVENTION ON THE REDUCTION OF STATELESSNESS,” UNHCR PUBLICATION 2010, P. 1.

citizens being deprived of citizenship. For instance, the case of succession states in the former Soviet Union or the deprivation of citizenship for some Palestinians living in Jordan.<sup>11</sup>

The development and strengthening of statelessness determination procedures will lead to better quantitative data, as per Action 10 of the Global Action Plan (GAP) to End Statelessness.<sup>12</sup> An upcoming opportunity for obtaining a more accurate picture of statelessness is the 2020 census; some States have opted to pre-code an option for census respondents to record themselves as stateless, as seen in the Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2020 Censuses of Population and Housing.<sup>13</sup> It is difficult, however, because some states do not regard these people as stateless. UNHCR reports it only has accurate data on stateless persons from 75 out of the 98 countries known to have populations of stateless people. Over the last decade, UNHCR has documented an additional 27 States with stateless populations.<sup>14</sup>

As of 2017, the largest stateless populations (over 100,000) where data was available was in Côte d'Ivoire (700,000), Myanmar and the Myanmar Rohingya populations displaced in Bangladesh (930,000), and Thailand (438,821, though more than 23,000 stateless persons were granted Thai nationality in the last four years as a part of the #IBelong campaign).<sup>15</sup>

## VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

The root causes of statelessness are similar to those for displacement of people in general—— natural disasters, conflict, human rights violations, or poverty. However, statelessness may also result from state succession. This includes either the coming into being of new states with somewhat artificial borders that cross natural ethnic boundaries as was the case

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<sup>11</sup> HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, "STATELESS AGAIN: PALESTINIAN-ORIGIN JORDANIANS DEPRIVED OF THEIR NATIONALITY," 2010 REPORT.

<sup>12</sup> UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR), GLOBAL ACTION PLAN TO END STATELESSNESS, 4 NOVEMBER 2014, AVAILABLE AT: [HTTP://WWW.REFWORLD.ORG/DOCID/545B47D64.HTML](http://www.refworld.org/docid/545b47d64.html).

<sup>13</sup> [HTTPS://WWW.UNHCR.ORG/PUBLICATIONS/2020RECOMM.HTML](https://www.unhcr.org/publications/2020recomm.html).

<sup>14</sup> UNHCR, GLOBAL TRENDS 2017, FIGURE 17, PG. 52.

<sup>15</sup> UNHCR, OVERCOMING STATELESSNESS IN THAILAND ONE CASE AT A TIME.

in the Middle East, or where new states come into being following the collapse of a predecessor state as witnessed after the demise of the Soviet Union or the breakup of former Yugoslavia.

The situation regarding the Palestinian population is especially complex from a legal standpoint. Some Palestinians have been provided with documentation by neighboring states, but the documentation falls short of full citizenship. Others have been granted citizenship status by the Palestinian Authority that now has observer state representation in the United Nations. But whether these actions or forms of documentation constitute full citizenship status, which would mean they would not qualify as stateless persons, is still open to debate. If they were to be considered stateless, they would be the largest stateless population in the world. Regardless of their current status, since in terms of humanitarian assistance they come under the auspices and mandate of the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) in Palestine, including Gaza, UNHCR does not deal with them as stateless persons and their situation would not come under the authority of UNHCR or its Executive Committee. Thus, resolutions addressing their situation would not be appropriate for this session of MUN.<sup>16</sup> However, if Palestinians have sought refuge beyond areas of UNRWA operations (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon the West Bank, and Gaza,) they could be considered under UNHCR's stateless mandate, if they are stateless, according to the international definition.<sup>17</sup>

Regional treaties play a role in strengthening UNHCR's authority on dealing with the world's statelessness issue; regional treaties include the African Charter on the Rights of the Child, the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Arab Charter on Human Rights, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

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<sup>16</sup> INTERVIEW WITH UNHCR STAFF FOCAL POINT ON THE MIDDLE EAST; SEE ALSO ABBAS SHIBLAK, "STATELESS PALESTINIANS," FORCED MIGRATION REVIEW, NO. 26, PP. 8-9.

<sup>17</sup> "STATELESS PALESTINIANS," FORCED MIGRATION REVIEW, NO. 26 P. 9.

(OIC) Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam. Many of the regional treaties emphasize the children's right to a nationality, as over a third of the world's stateless population are children.<sup>18</sup>

Regarding conflict and/or human rights violations, in the case of refugees and particularly refugee children, those born in the recipient or host country may not be granted citizenship by that country. Considering the average time a refugee spends in exile is approximately 20 years,<sup>19</sup> this has the potential to create an entire generation of stateless persons. Yet, the country of origin from which their parents fled may also deny the child citizenship since they were not born in that country. These situations highlight the two major criteria upon which citizenship is granted (aside from naturalization): *jus soli* ("law of the soil") and *jus sanguinis* ("law of blood").<sup>20</sup> UNHCR's efforts are primarily focused on *jus soli*, or de jure stateless populations in efforts to close legislative loopholes that leave people stateless. In the former case, states grant citizenship automatically to anyone born on the state's territory; in the latter, states grant citizenship based on blood ties. While states maintain sovereignty as to the criteria of citizenship, many refugee children born outside their parents' home country would not qualify under either criterion. Some states only allow citizenship to certain races or ethnicities. Additionally there are 27 nations do not allow women, in this case mothers, to pass along their nationality to their children.<sup>21</sup> Thus, if the father has died or there is a divorce, a child who would have obtained their father's nationality at a designated age, may no longer be granted that nationality or the nationality of their mother. Statelessness in children, compounded with limited access to civil documentation in developing nations, makes it difficult for states and non state

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<sup>18</sup> UNHCR, A SPECIAL REPORT: ENDING STATELESSNESS .

<sup>19</sup> WORLD BANK, "HOW MANY YEARS DO REFUGEES STAY IN EXILE?"

<sup>20</sup> UNHCR, THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S REFUGEES: A HUMANITARIAN AGENDA, PG. 3.

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR, ENDING STATELESSNESS

actors to provide any kind of assistance.<sup>22</sup> Registration may be difficult for stateless persons displaced by conflict who lose or leave behind documentation while fleeing.

Two of the newly independent Baltic states (Estonia and Latvia) exemplify the challenges of determining nationality following the collapse of a state or changes in boundaries. Both enacted citizenship laws that discriminated against people of Russian descent, many of whom had lived in those Republics for decades prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The new citizenship laws requires former citizens to pass a language exam in order to qualify for citizenship. This criterion was applied to everyone but is particularly hard to meet for many older Russians since they had not learned the native language during their time in the Republic when it was still a part of the USSR.<sup>23</sup> In 2017, UNHCR reported that Estonia and Latvia have taken steps to “further facilitate the acquisition of citizenship by those born in Estonia and Latvia to non-citizen parents, which will help ensure that these situations are resolved over time.”<sup>24</sup>

In addition, the General Assembly addressed this issue through a draft proposal of the International Law Commission and subsequent resolutions.<sup>25</sup> General Assembly resolution 55/153 contains the draft proposal for a possible convention on the topic of “Nationality of natural persons in relation to the succession of States.” While no particular State is mentioned, those drafting the document obviously had in mind events occurring in both the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia. The draft proposal lays out guidelines to follow in granting inhabitants of these territories either in the predecessor State or successor State, while ensuring that whatever is done does not cause the individual to become stateless. While there are some

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<sup>22</sup> UNHCR, A SPECIAL REPORT: ENDING STATELESSNESS IN 10 YEARS PG 8-9.

<sup>23</sup> BASED IN PART ON INTERVIEW WITH UNHCR DELEGATE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S THIRD COMMITTEE. THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION REGULARLY RAISES CONCERNS ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF THESE PEOPLE DURING DEBATES ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE THIRD COMMITTEE. FOR AN ANALYSIS OF SOME OF THE LEGAL ISSUES INVOLVED AS WELL AS THOSE INVOLVED IN ASYLUM DELIBERATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES, SEE MARYELLEN FULLERTON, "THE INTERSECTION OF STATELESSNESS AND REFUGEE PROTECTION IN US ASYLUM POLICY," JMHS VOLUME 2, NUMBER 4 2014 (PP 144-164).

<sup>24</sup> UNHCR, STATELESSNESS AROUND THE WORLD.

<sup>25</sup> A/RES/54/112, 55/153, 59/34, 63/118, AND 66/92.

limiting conditions, in most cases it is recommended that the individual have the option of taking the nationality of either of the two States. Further, all Member States were requested to comment on the possibility of agreeing to a convention on this issue.<sup>26</sup> However, after several years where the item was discussed in the Sixth Committee with no resolution of these issue (1954, 1955, 1963, 1966), the General Assembly gave up and in the latest resolution (A/RES/66/92, OP4) decided that, upon request of any State, it will revert to the question of nationality of natural persons in relation to the succession of States, in particular concerning the avoidance of statelessness.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the GA will not consider the issue unless a Member State asks it to do so, and that is not likely to happen in the immediate future.

## PROBLEMS FACING STATELESS PERSONS

Stateless persons face challenges and obstacles to their everyday lives, worsened by the lack of legal protection from the country they reside in. Potential areas of discrimination include, but are not limited to, education, employment, cultural or religious observance, access to medical care, and freedom of movement. The resources available to them may be limited and inadequate. Being stateless means lacking a sense of identity and limits their ability to participate in the political process since they usually do not have the right to vote.<sup>28</sup> This may also have a negative impact on their community, since stateless persons cannot fully contribute to the community itself due to discrimination or lack of identity with the community. The long-term effects of lack of education or employment, the need for health care, and other factors can ultimately contribute to greater poverty if these conditions are not remedied.

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<sup>26</sup> A/RES/55/153. STATE COMMENTS WERE INCLUDED IN REPORTS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY - A/59/180 AND ADD. 1 AND 2; A/63/113; AND A/66/78 AND ADD. 1.

<sup>27</sup> A/RES/66/92, OPERATIVE PARAGRAPH 4.

<sup>28</sup> "PREVENTING AND REDUCING STATELESSNESS: THE 1961 CONVENTION ON THE REDUCTION OF STATELESSNESS," UNHCR PUBLICATION 2010, P. 2



## POLICIES AND PROGRAMS: UNHCR AND GOVERNMENT EFFORTS

While not all stateless persons are refugees, they are often in refugee-like situations. This is one of the reasons UNHCR received the mandate to help them, but as is the case today with refugees, most stateless people live in urban, non-camp settings. Thus, UNHCR's work on behalf of stateless persons is often conducted on a more abstract or legal level than typical operations out in the field designed to assist displaced persons in camps. In 2017, UNHCR reported that 56,500 stateless persons were granted citizenship in 29 countries "with significant reductions occurring in the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sweden, Tajikistan, and Thailand, among other places. In Tajikistan, for example, close to 12,000 people had their nationality confirmed in 2017, as did 11,000 in Thailand."<sup>29</sup> This process ultimately relies on the political will and cooperation of national governments who are the only actors who can grant citizenship and thus reduce the number of stateless persons throughout the world. Nevertheless, UNHCR has undertaken a number of steps in cooperation with governments and other humanitarian actors to try and reduce statelessness.

First, UNHCR has constantly advocated for accession to the two Statelessness Conventions. The Conventions provide guidelines that, if followed, would diminish the number of stateless persons. With a greater number of states adhering to the Conventions, the international community would develop more consistency and uniformity in how stateless persons were treated, promote a "rule of law," and more efficient regulation of migration.<sup>30</sup> Second, UNHCR works extensively with its usual partners in the humanitarian area to promote concern for stateless persons, raise awareness of the issue, and improve protection or their access to basic human rights. These partners include The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund

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<sup>29</sup> UNHCR, "GLOBAL TRENDS 2017" CH. 6, P. 53.

<sup>30</sup> "HELPING THE WORLD'S STATELESS PEOPLE," UNHCR PUBLICATION 2011, PG. 6.

(UNFPA), numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs), regional organizations and civil society.<sup>31</sup> Third, UNHCR works closely with Governments to provide technical advice and encouragement regarding national legislation to address the concerns of stateless people. While the establishment of such legislation is ultimately the responsibility and prerogative of the State, UNHCR can provide useful information on legislation and best practices in other countries.<sup>32</sup> Such practices could include simplifying application procedures, prohibiting withdrawal of nationality if it would result in statelessness, allowing women to pass along their nationality to their children, ensuring birth registration, the granting of residence permits, providing the rights to travel and return, access to employment, improved access to education and health services, and ultimately, for some, granting citizenship.<sup>33</sup> Other strategies could include having a clear vision and a regional focus; investing in research on the need for attention to and reforms in dealing with statelessness; building coalitions, and promoting media coverage.<sup>34</sup> Finally, out in the field, UNHCR has begun a very extensive registration and documentation program to assist refugees, internally displaced persons, and stateless persons in obtaining documents to give them identity and access to necessary services. UNHCR also provides training programs for government officials regarding registration and documentation procedures.<sup>35</sup>

Many governments have taken steps to reduce statelessness. As noted earlier, several have acceded to the Conventions. Some 30 states are participating in UNHCR studies and surveys as part of Action 10 of the Global Action Plan<sup>36</sup> to improve both qualitative and quantitative data for stateless persons and how to best assist them, for example in Kazakhstan

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<sup>31</sup> "HELPING THE WORLD'S STATELESS PEOPLE," UNHCR PUBLICATION 2015, P. 7.

<sup>32</sup> "HELPING THE WORLD'S STATELESS PEOPLE," UNHCR PUBLICATION 2015 P. 5-7.

<sup>33</sup> LAURA VAN WAAS, "THE SITUATION OF STATELESS PEOPLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA," REPORT PREPARED FOR UNHCR, OCTOBER 2010, *PASSIM*

<sup>34</sup> LAURA VAN WAAS, "THE SITUATION OF STATELESS PEOPLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA," REPORT PREPARED FOR UNHCR, OCTOBER 2010, P. 41.

<sup>35</sup> "HELPING THE WORLD'S STATELESS PEOPLE," UNHCR PUBLICATION 2011, PP 6-8.

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR, "GLOBAL ACTION PLAN TO END STATELESSNESS," P. 24.

and Zambia. In addition, in 2017, the Rohingya population was identified as stateless, instead of in the separate category of displaced persons to give a more accurate account of the world's stateless population, as stateless Rohingya populations are currently displaced throughout Myanmar and Bangladesh.<sup>37</sup> The Rohingya are a Muslim population that have resided in the Myanmar Rakhine State, and have been denied citizenship in Myanmar based on their ethnicity.<sup>38</sup> After attacks on the Rohingya residences in Myanmar in 2016, hundreds of thousands fled to Bangladesh in what UNHCR characterizes as, "the largest and fastest refugee influx seen in the region in the past twenty years."<sup>39</sup> UNHCR has called on the state of Myanmar to put an end to this humanitarian crisis by ending the Rohingya population's statelessness. As previously mentioned, Estonia and Latvia have taken steps to prevent another generation of stateless persons. Additionally, Brazil resolved the statelessness crisis of Brasileirinhos Apatridás children in 2007, and 300,000 Urdu-speakers (sometimes referred to as Biharis) were granted citizenship in Bangladesh in 2008.<sup>40</sup> All States, however, could share best practices, reexamine their existing legislation in light of best practices, take steps to improve educational opportunities, ensure that stateless persons have access to basic public services, promote more effective registration and documentation, and implement pledges they have made.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A RESOLUTION

Generally, UNHCR resolutions are adopted by consensus. The primary reason for this is because questions relating to UNHCR are considered humanitarian rather than political in nature, despite the fact that there are obvious political issues and ramifications involved. In addition,

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<sup>37</sup> UNHCR, "GLOBAL TRENDS 2017," CH. 6, P 52.

<sup>38</sup> "UNHCR MYANMAR REPORTED A BASELINE ESTIMATE OF 900,000 NON-DISPLACED STATELESS PEOPLE IN RAKHINE STATE AT THE START OF THE YEAR. HOWEVER, IN LIGHT OF THE 655,500 ARRIVALS FROM MYANMAR REPORTED IN BANGLADESH IN 2017, AND SOME 470,000 NON-DISPLACED STATELESS PERSONS ESTIMATED TO BE REMAINING IN RAKHINE STATE AT YEAR-END, IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT THE BASELINE ESTIMATE WAS TOO LOW" UNHCR "GLOBAL TRENDS 2017," PP. 22-25.

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR "GLOBAL TRENDS 2017," PP. 22-25.

<sup>40</sup> UNHCR, "STATELESSNESS AROUND THE WORLD."

resolutions adopted by consensus, though they are often watered down, carry more weight than those adopted by a vote. Delegates should, then, attempt to reach consensus at Model UN on one comprehensive resolution that would address the issue of statelessness and its consequences on stateless persons.

Delegates could consider the following:

- A. Encourage Governments to consider acceding to one or both of the statelessness Conventions.
- B. Encourage Governments to share best practices in terms of programming and legislation regarding stateless persons.
- C. Encourage Governments to participate in UNHCR campaigns, such as the 2014 #IBelong call to end statelessness by 2024.
- D. Call for greater cooperation between UNHCR, Governments, and NGOs to assist stateless persons.
- E. Encourage donors to provide additional financial and technical support to UNHCR and other States dealing with issues relating to stateless persons
- F. Call upon Governments to adhere to pledges they have made regarding stateless persons.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Does your State have a stateless population? Under what circumstances did that stateless population arise; conflict, state succession, lack of adequate documentation and recordkeeping?
2. How does your State partner with UNHCR to assist stateless persons? How could this be improved?
3. If your State does not have a stateless population, can your states assist other States that do?

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