



Georgia State University Model United Nations
General Assembly Plenary
<http://www.gsumun.com/committees/gaplen>
Director: Matthew Richmond

Delegates of the General Assembly Plenary,

Hello, my name is Matthew Richmond and I will be your director for the United Nations General Assembly Plenary committee. This is my first year chairing at GSUMUN and am looking forward to a great conference. I will be assisted by my Assistant Directors, Liliana Bakhtiari and Raya Sidiqi. I am very excited about this committee and the topics we will discuss. I am also looking forward to the resolutions and ideas that will come about on these crucial issues of our time.

The topics for the committee are as follows:

1. Reexamining disaster response policies and capabilities within the UN system
2. Promoting development and humanitarian aid to regions without developed natural resources
3. Regional cooperation towards diversification

Delegates are encouraged to read the background guides and evaluate for their individual state's needs within the global system. I wish you all the best of luck in your research, I hope you all will be eagerly awaiting the conference; I know I will!

Best Wishes,

Matthew Richmond

Liliana Bakhtiari

Raya Sidiqi

History of the General Assembly Plenary Committee

The General Assembly (GA) committee is one of the six main organs of the United Nations System, with the other five being the Security Council, Secretariat, the International Court of Justice, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council. The General Assembly was formed along with the other five main bodies with the inception of the UN Charter in 1945. The General Assembly is charged with a number of duties from the Charter. The GA may discuss any question within the scope of the Charter. The General Assembly may call the Security Council's attention to matters of international peace and security. The General Assembly also considers and approves the budget for the entire UN and also decides how the Members of the UN shall bear the expenses of the UN.

Every Member of the United Nations is represented in the General Assembly, in essence making the General Assembly the "World's Parliament". The General Assembly was designed to be a general debate arena where all Member States would be equally represented according to a one state/one-vote formula⁵. Therefore, all Members of the United Nations have a seat in the General Assembly. The General Assembly has literally tackled almost every issue that could be considered contentious in world politics: decolonization, the right of self-determination, human rights crises, apartheid, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and many others. The General Assembly has been at the forefront of these issues from the very beginning of its existence. For instance, in 1948 the General Assembly passed General Assembly Resolution 181 which gave the state of Israel international recognition as a sovereign state. The General Assembly, although having no direct military power, has played a very large role in international politics, giving developing states a forum to alleviate concerns with the world order.

It is highly recommended that delegates come in fully prepared for the GA Plenary committee with respect to research. This means that any resolutions that your delegation would think are important to the topic at hand should be researched and preferably in your binder when you walk in the door. Also, it is absolutely vital that your delegation has a copy of the United Nations Charter for reference purposes. Specifically, it would be best to concentrate on Chapter IV, Articles 9-22, which specifically deal with the General Assembly. It is also highly recommended that you and your delegation have a working knowledge of the rules of procedure. Although this is a learning conference, it is vital that you and your delegation have a general idea of the proceedings of the committee.

I. Reexamining disaster response policies and capabilities within the UN system

Introduction

As laid out in Article 1 of the United Nations Charter, one of the primary goals of the UN is, “To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character...”¹ This principle includes the issue of disaster relief, which has become a significant issue in recent decades with a wave of natural and human disasters. The UN has a long history of evaluating disaster response policies and capabilities for Member States. One of the first efforts was in 1971, when the General Assembly passed Resolution 2816, which called for the establishment of a Disaster Relief Coordinator and called on Member States to work on their individual national responses.² However, there was little in the way of implementing this principle until the late 1980s, when the UN declared in Resolution 42/169 to, “to designate the 1990s as a decade in which the international community, under the auspices of the United Nations, will pay special attention to fostering international co-operation in the field of natural disaster reduction.”³ In December 1991, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 46/182, aimed at strengthening the United Nation's response “to both complex emergencies and natural disasters” and increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian operations in the field. Under this resolution, the Secretary-General created the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) as well as the high level position of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC).⁴ Resolution 46/182 also created the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) as key coordination mechanisms and tools of the ERC.⁵

Current Situation

Over the last decade, the occurrence of natural disasters along with exposure to greater levels of loss of life and property has seen marked increases. The lives of millions of civilians are at risk particularly in underdeveloped countries with have limited infrastructure, high population densities and inadequate emergency preparedness. A major concern that must be addressed is the impact that disasters and complex emergencies can place on local populations. Additionally, the international community has been faced with recent preventable disasters such open conflicts which have seen vast increases in deliberate civilian targeting, the use of rape and sexual violence against women and children, and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people attempting to flee conflict. This is exacerbated as there are twice as many conflict-induced internally displaced persons (IDPs) as refugees, while 90% of all refugees stay in their regions of origin.⁶

Case Study: The 2004 Tsunami Response

On December 26, 2004, a massive earthquake hit the Indian Ocean off the coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra.⁷ It triggered a devastating tsunami which killed over 250,000 people and destroyed thousands of homes and businesses from Kenya to Malaysia. The catastrophic damage created a massive humanitarian crisis, which demanded the immediate response of the United Nations.

¹ “United Nations Charter: Article 1.” United Nations. <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter1.shtml>

² “GA Resolution 2816 (XXVI).” United Nations. <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/328/32/IMG/NR032832.pdf?OpenElement>

³ “GA Resolution 46/169.” United Nations. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/42/a42r169.htm>

⁴ “Humanitarian Issues.” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. <http://ochaonline.un.org/HumanitarianIssues/tabid/1081/Default.aspx>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “Humanitarian Issues.” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. <http://ochaonline.un.org/HumanitarianIssues/tabid/1081/Default.aspx>

⁷ “Southeast Asia Tsunami.” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. <http://ochaonline.un.org/AboutOCHA/NaturalDisasters/SouthAsiaTsunami/tabid/1350/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland stated, "The massive earthquake and resulting tsunamis in South Asia are a tragic reminder of just how vulnerable we are - and how fragile are our defences - when confronted by nature's destructive powers. The human toll wrought by the catastrophe in Asia is incalculable. Millions of people living in coastal areas that rim the Indian Ocean have lost relatives, their homes and their livelihoods to the ocean's mighty swelling."⁸ The UN response saw strong action from the UN General Assembly which passed two items, Resolution 59/279⁹ and Agenda Item 79.¹⁰ Coordination was also done through the UN Development Programme¹¹ as well as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.¹² Nevertheless, the major concern was how to coordinate all the needed supplies with the appropriate agencies. As one UN news brief put it, "Resources are not lacking, neither financial, nor in terms of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved, "but the efforts are scattered."¹³

Committee Directive

The major issue is the transition from humanitarian to development-oriented aid which is critical when looking to long-term solutions to these issues. Poorly managed transitions can lead to issues of aid dependency and can eventually lead to weakening state institutions.¹⁴ Therefore, the committee needs to determine how the UN may better manage transition efforts that lead to stronger, more efficient responses that respect state sovereignty. Additionally, delegates should also review how the United Nations General Assembly can better coordinate efforts with other international and/or non-governmental organizations to deal with natural disasters and complex emergencies. Finally, delegates need to consider disaster situations that are exacerbated by human conflict and how to address the individual issues.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "GA Resolution 59/279." United Nations.

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/493/00/PDF/N0449300.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁰ "GA Agenda Item 79." United Nations. <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N05/598/78/PDF/N0559878.pdf?OpenElement>

¹¹ United Nations Development Programme and the Tsunami: <http://www.undp.org/cpr/disred/tsunami/>

¹² "Southeast Asia Tsunami." United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

<http://ochaonline.un.org/AboutOCHA/NaturalDisasters/SouthAsiaTsunami/tabid/1350/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

¹³ "Five years after tsunami, Indonesia better prepared for catastrophes." UN News Centre.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31810&Cr=Humanitarian+Day&Cr1=>

¹⁴ Ibid.

II. Promoting development and humanitarian aid to regions without developed natural resources

Introduction

The issue of natural resource development in underdeveloped states is one of the most pressing issues facing the world today. Many regions have seen resource conflicts related to or exacerbated by famine and genocide. This issue is even more pressing when one considers that many of these conflicts include preventable humanitarian issues. For the United Nations, one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) focuses on a specific aspect of this problem, which is, “Develop a Global Partnership for Development.”¹⁵ This is especially true for states that lack developed natural resources where there is little encouragement for investment. The problem consists of how to encourage development programs and investment into such areas while still avoiding the often unforeseen loss of sovereignty and control over limited resource development. This is a complex and difficult problem as the world’s population continues to increase and the world’s resources are being precariously unstable. One example was illustrated by a meeting of the European Union’s environmental council, which commented saying “economic development would begin to be restricted by a lack of resources as early as this century, and that a third industrial revolution would be required in order to alleviate this situation.”¹⁶ Therefore, regions must be concerned with states that may be now or possibly in the future facing dire circumstances related to lacking natural resources.

Case Study: Least Developed Countries

One of the most pressing needs concerning this topic is the Least Developed Countries. This list compiled maintained by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. One of its purposes is to, “To undertake appropriate advocacy work in favour of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in partnership with the relevant parts of the United Nations...” as well as, “To assist in mobilizing international support and resources for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and other programmes and initiatives for landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.”¹⁷ The General Assembly utilized this body during its Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in May 2001. They released a report, Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 highlighting some of the most important economic concerns that these states face economically.¹⁸ Among the most important and relevant commitments that were made in the programme are “building productive capacities to make globalization work for LDCs,” and, “mobilizing financial resources.”¹⁹

Committee Directive:

Some of the most pressing issues of the next century will be that of energy production and usage, stable food markets, and access to fresh, clean water. To ensure peoples access to these goods, the international community needs to further investigate ways to fairly distribute and develop natural resources to promote stable regions. The possible manners of going about this should be considered. Should regions rely on bilateral trade agreements or free trade areas to explore resource balance?

¹⁵ “About the MDGs: the Basics.” UN Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml>

¹⁶ “Lack of new resources to be alleviated by new technology.” Kesskonnaministerium. <http://www.envir.ee/554813>

¹⁷ “About UN-OHRLLS.” United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States. <http://www.unohrlls.org/en/about/>

¹⁸ “Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010.” United Nations. http://www.unohrlls.org/UserFiles/File/G0151734_A%20CONF_191%2011.pdf

¹⁹ Ibid.

Should large international organizations such as the World Trade Organization and the World Bank to fund programs to promote alternative industries in countries that lack resources? Should the United Nations take a firm stand in promoting cooperation between nations in regions that suffer from lacking natural resources? What is the best way to fairly distribute goods if at all?

III: Combating the spread of ethnic conflicts across borders

Introduction

Ethnic conflict is one of the longest standing obstacles in the world today. The vast majority of conflicts are based on an ethnic division, whether it is Somalia, the Caucasus, or the Middle East. In the United Nations Charter, Article 1 states one goal to be, “To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace.”²⁰ This included the struggles between ethnicities as well considering the issue of self-determination. The question then remains how to prevent these conflicts from spreading when they often find their basis in the argument of self-determination or past colonial mistakes.

Overview of the spread ethnic conflicts

Ethnic conflicts have seemingly become predominant issues within the international world today. Nations around the world are affected by the repercussions of such conflicts and face the many challenges that go along with ethnic conflicts across borders. Outcomes of these conflicts include internally displaced persons, refugees and regional instability. These grave conflicts occur mainly due to the failure of social and political systems within an area.²¹ The United Nations has been working strenuously to combat the spread of ethnic conflicts across borders on many occasions. The protection of minorities facing such conflicts is acted upon through the UN’s conventions on genocide and the United Nation High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Sub-committee for the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities.²² The Sub-committee encourages communication between countries involved in ethnic inter-state conflicts and reiterates the need for States to search for peaceful solutions to such ethnic conflicts among other objectives.²³

Ethnic conflict within history

Ethnic conflicts across borders have been around for centuries, but more emphasis was placed on the issue at hand after the fail of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.²⁴ One of the most prominent ethnic conflicts to occur in Africa was the issue in Rwanda. The brutal rivalry between the Hutus and Tutsis resulted in the death of approximately 500,000 Rwandans and creation of conflict in neighboring countries.²⁵ Another notorious conflict occurred in the European area of the Balkans. More than an ethnic conflict, this issue escalated into a matter of religious clashes. This conflict between the Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs left victims of the conflict desperately seeking aid from the international world. The lack of substantial aid played a role in part to the 102,000 that lost their lives amidst this ethnic conflict.²⁶

Case study: Palestine

One of the most devastating conflicts in today’s world is the Palestinian conflict. This is a prime example of the spread of ethnic conflict. The events that truly sparked this conflict date back to Ottoman Empire days.²⁷ A conflict such as this one seems to be an intrastate conflict, but on the contrary, it’s a struggle that the world faces together. The Israeli government refuses to consider the Palestinian territories as an independent Palestine. Because of this, most Arab states refuse to

²⁰ <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter1.shtml>

²¹ <http://igcc.ucsd.edu/pdf/policybriefs/pb03.pdf>

²² <http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10509/>

²³ <http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/TestFrame/381ae7b981fac1a0802566570055755a?Opendocument>

²⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_conflict#Ethnic_conflict_in_the_post-Cold_War_world

²⁵ <http://www.mapsofworld.com/rwanda/information/genocide-statistics.html>

²⁶ <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1291965/posts>

²⁷ <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/missionstudies/israelpalestine/timeline/>

acknowledge Israel as a legitimate state.²⁸ Another alliance within this conflict is the partnership between Israel and the United States of America. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has also brought about many other issues such as human rights issues, refugees, and Israeli settlements.²⁹ There have been many attempts to resolve the issue by simply brokering a two-state solution. The Palestinian people view the area of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as their future autonomous region. However, the West Bank area is currently occupied by the Israeli military. In recent years, the Israeli government has also reduced the amount of fuel and electricity distributed to the Gaza area.³⁰ Many lives have been lost amidst this conflict and it has yet to cease.

Committee Directive:

Looking throughout history, there unfortunately has been ethnic conflict within civilized history, but the committee should study the history of ethnic violence for various reasons to see how conflict was solved. How was that conflict resolution handled and can it be updated for today's standards? If a conflict begins, what steps could be taken to alleviate the issue while bearing in mind the need to maintain the sovereignty of their respective nations? Furthermore, consider what are the possible causes of ethnic conflicts that reciprocally generate these inter-state ethnic conflicts. Finally, research the role of foreign aid in lowering and raising tensions in conflict and how those issues may be used to resolve problems.

²⁸ <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/israel-palestine-and-the-occupied-territories.html>

²⁹ <http://www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal/glossarycollapsible.htm>

³⁰ <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/01/12/gaza.aid.diary/index.html>