Valdosta State University Model United Nations
Background Guide for General Assembly Third Committee

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Valdosta State University Model United Nations Conference of 2016. We are honored to have you join this meeting of the General Assembly Third Committee. My name is Shelby Simmons, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this conference for a second year in a row. This also marks the second year of my involvement with the Valdosta State Model United Nations team, and I couldn't ask for a more passionate and dedicated team of students. I'm currently a senior at Valdosta State pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Political Science with a concentration in International Politics. Upon graduation, I plan to work full time with a political non-profit organization while furthering my education by pursuing a Master's degree in Political Science.

Since joining the Valdosta State Model United Nations team, I have attended three conferences. The Southern Regional Model United Nations (SRMUN) conference was held in Atlanta in the fall of 2014, and then the National Model United Nations (NMUN) of spring 2015 took place in New York City. After gaining much knowledge and experience, I also had the pleasure of attending Florida Model United Nations (FMUN) in the fall of 2015. There are no words to describe the intensity of these conferences and how much they prepare you for real life scenarios. Model United Nations teaches valuable skills such as negotiation, diplomacy, writing, organization, research, leadership, teamwork, and above all the importance of working hard to achieve a common goal. Not only do you learn these important skills, but you also gain priceless friendships with people from all over the world. The opportunities that result from meeting these people and gaining invaluable experience are endless.

This year, the General Assembly Third Committee will consider the following topics:

I. Eliminating Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerances
II. Promoting equal access to education for women and indigenous peoples
III. Coordinating effective humanitarian aid between NGO's and state actors for disaster response

The General Assembly Third Committee focuses on addressing social, humanitarian, and cultural issues facing countries all over the world. This background guide thoroughly covers each of the topics followed by a committee directive to focus your position papers upon.

Best of luck delegates!

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The General Assembly Third

Introduction

Following the end of World War II, the international community saw the need for the establishment of a new organization that would prevent another war that "brought untold sorrow to mankind," as stated in the Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations. [1] Thus the United Nations was created, in order to "to reaffirm faith in the 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."[2] The General Assembly has helped aid this goal since its establishment as the primary deliberative organ of the UN. Furthermore, the GA is able to make recommendations to Member States, as well as other organs of the UN, under a very broad mandate.[3]

Mandate

Perhaps the most crucial aspect of the GA's mandate is its ability to address nearly any issue within the Charter of the United Nations. To address this broad mandate, multiple committees have been established. However, the GA 3rd committee has been designated as the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee.[4] Through this, the GA 3rd has been specifically able to address human rights issues in recent years. In the beginnings of the UN, the GA 3rd was considered less important, because issues of security and economics were considered more important than social issues at the time; however, it has now become a champion for human rights within the UN.

Structure and Powers

As outlined in Article 9 of the Charter of the United Nations, all 193 members of the UN have representation within the GA.[5] While each Member State is allowed one vote, many resolutions are passed through general consensus. This has been because of the strong effort of Member States to use diplomatic negotiations to avoid a formal vote. [6]

As mentioned before, the numerous GA committees have been established to address the broad mandate of the issues they are delegated. The first Committee deals with matters of international security, as well as peace. The GA 2nd Committee examines the international economy. The GA 3rd Committee is responsible for social, cultural, and humanitarian issue. The GA 4th Committee deals with special issues. The GA 5th is designated as dealing with budgetary matters. The Final committee deals with questions of legality within the General Assembly. [7]

The GA has a number of different powers within the UN. The GA carries out a number of case studies in order to make recommendations to Member States and other organs of the UN. [8] The GA is also able to carry out decisions on the UN budget, through the 5th Committee.[9] Furthermore, with the establishment of the famous Resolution 377; the GA has also been tasked with the power to immediately address matters pertaining to international peace and security, if

the Security Council fails to do so. [10] The GA also holds the function of electing five non-permanent members to the Security Council. [11]

Recent Work

In previous sessions, the GA 3rd has shown its commitment to issues of human rights, particularly through its work with the Human Rights Council. [12] The Human Rights Council was established in 2006, and members of the GA elect its members. [13]

The GA 3rd is currently in its seventieth session, under the leadership of Omar Hilale, the current chair of the committee from Morocco. [14] During its last session, the GA 3rd considered over 60 draft resolutions, containing many regarding human rights issues. The GA 3rd is expected to keep up this great work during its current session, and will meet with numerous experts and chairs from the Human Rights Council. [15]

Conclusion

The GA has been tasked with a wide variety of issues; however the GA 3rd is responsible for social, humanitarian, and cultural issues. Despite the still rather broad range of issues it is tasked to address, the GA 3rd has primarily focused on promoting and protecting human rights. While the committee has not always been considered one of the more important committees within the GA, it is now seen as one of the more crucial committees in current times.

I. Eliminating Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerances

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) has taken actions towards the issue of racial discrimination since its inception, stating in the Charter of the United Nations (1945) the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms are without distinction as to race.[16] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) that later followed, reinforces the principles that declared that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.[17] Article 1 of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1963) confirms this, by stating "discrimination between human beings on the grounds of race, color, or ethnic origin is an offence to human dignity and shall be condemned and is a fact capable of disturbing peace and security among nations."[18] The Declaration further targeted racism as an ideology, asserting "any doctrine of racial differentiation or superiority is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous… Thus, there is no justification for racism in theory or practice." [19] This framework is very important as it sets the foundation for the work of the international community involving this topic. Early actions within the UN system focused on mostly eradicating racism in Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories, where the acts of segregation, discrimination, and racial intolerance were installed by the governing powers. The UN General Assembly "repeatedly supported the legitimacy of the struggle of oppressed population," recognizing discrimination as a result of colonialism in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People adopted in 1960.[20] The "system of legalized racial discrimination" in South Africa, is an example of an issue that was discussed early by the

UN. In Sharpeville, South Africa, March 21st 1960, the police had opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration. Such a travesty caused the UN to take action and started efforts to address racial discrimination at the international level. This movement helped create the "International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination" in March 21 1960, which later led to the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1963. The International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) (1965) defines racial discrimination as:

"distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life."[21]

Background

Xenophobia is described by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as being a broad concept in which a person or persons have an "intense dislike or hatred against people that are perceived as outsiders, strangers or foreigners to a group, community or nation, based on their presumed or real descent, national, ethnic or social origin, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation or other grounds." [22] Acts that are termed xenophobic are intentional as the goal is to humiliate, denigrate and/or hurt the person(s) and the associated group of people through direct discrimination, hostility or violence and incitement of hatred. Daily acts of racial and ethnic discrimination are a normal occurrence, which delays the advancement for millions of people worldwide. Between the years of 2007-2009, the OHCHR has reported that 55% of violent conflicts occurred which violated minority rights and caused distress among the communities.[23] Intolerance, in any form, fuel ethnic hatred by denying the basic human right of equality. Racial intolerance, discrimination, and xenophobia, are referred as forms of prejudice directed towards an individual with an ethnic background. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called upon leaders around the globe to reject and oppose the ideas and actions that promote racism, racial discrimination, and xenophobia and all other related intolerances. Racism and xenophobia undermine peace, security, justice, and social progress; thus it is an important topic on the agenda of GA Third.

Current Situation

It is perfectly clear that racial discrimination does exists not only in lesser- developed nations, but all around the world. Xenophobia is often referred to as 'new racism' because of the post-war era shift from racial to cultural bias. In the 20th century, there has been a troubling often perceived as threats and competition in job markets and public services. The political climate of the hosting state also often drives the citizen's views of and reactions to the immigrants; if the government shows a defensive stance, such as strengthening border patrol, citizens are more likely to show xenophobia and discriminatory character.

Action Taken

At the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in 2001, Member States affirmed their dedication to eradicating intolerances and making the matter a priority. Furthermore, the resolution declared solidarity with people of African descent and their continuous struggle with discrimination. [24] The Chair of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, Verence Shepherd quotes "people of African descent have for centuries been victims of racism, racial discrimination, enslavement and denial of their rights."[25] The GA took further action by naming 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent to. On 4 November 2013, the GA Third heard from UN experts who reinforced a call for an International Decade for People of African Decent while debating the issues of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerances. Consequently, GA Resolution 68/237 of 2014 proclaimed 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent, and requested to produce a program for the application of the International Decade and assign funding for the process and activities.[26] Its observance by the UN will bring together actors across the international community with the ambitions of upholding equality, greater economic and social development, and social justice for people of African descent. Certain activities include developing studies and reports, influence the media to represent diversity, and invite UN Education, Science, and Cultural Organization to support teaching materials and tools for instruction and activities linking to rights of individuals of African descent and other ethnicities. With this decade now a reality, it stays as a high priority for the GA third. The Sustainable Development Goals address the matter by setting a target to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status by 2030. [27]

Conclusion

Tremendous efforts have been made towards eliminating the various forms of discrimination in the world, but the battle is far from over. People of African descent, indigenous peoples, and many ethnicities are still subject to abhorrent discrimination throughout the world, and Member States are committed to taking any appropriate measures necessary to ensure their inclusion and respect. The global community must continue its diligent efforts in order to meet Sustainable Development Goals and reduce inequalities.

Committee Directive

Delegates should suggest ways to meet the Sustainable Development Goal to reduce inequalities by 2030. Present new solutions to eliminating discrimination and strengthen existing efforts. Furthermore, delegates could consider ways to change perceptions at local levels to promote acceptance and inclusiveness in future generations.

II. Promoting equal access to education for women

Introduction

Women's right to education has been an issue since the founding of the United Nations. Many nations states within the United Nations have been against women having formal education historically and culturally, even though it is in the United Nations Charter "equal rights for men and women" some countries have not tried very hard to push for women's rights much less their education.[28] Also, some countries do not have the means to provide their citizens with formal education. They are not trying to keep women from becoming educated, but lack the mean to accomplish it.

Background

Women historically have been unable to have access to even the most basic of primary education of any kind. Even today as the world has progressed with regards to gender equality, women are much less likely to have any formal education at all then men. [29] The United Nations since its founding has been under pressure from women and men from all countries to set right this injustice. The United Nations has created many committees, programs and councils to focus on this issue, but still to this day the issue persists. Since 1990 education has been one of the major issues the United Nations has committed itself to. Women in education have been a main focus because of the large gap there is worldwide between women and men attending or receiving some form of formal education. The United Nations Charter makes it where every Member State must at least try to attain equal rights for men and women, including education.[30] Education is a human right and therefore must be accessible by all, men and women.

Current Situation

According to the United Nations statics division, in particular "The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics" two thirds of the 774 million adult illiterates worldwide are women, the same proportion for the past 20 years and across most regions.[31] Some suggest the actions the United Nations has taken to alleviate this matter have been for the large part inconsequential. Looking at the "72 million children of primary school age that are not attending school, out of which over 39 million (or 54 per cent) are girls", does not help to build confidence with what the United Nations have been doing until now.[32] But that does not mean that all the resources and time the United Nations spends on this issue has been for not, there has been some improvement in the amount of women worldwide that are in scientific research positions, "women account for slightly more than a quarter of all scientific researchers an increase compared to previous decades" and the "global youth literacy rate has increased to 89 per cent, while the gender gap has declined to 5 percentage points" meaning that what the United Nations and Member States have done is not insignificant.[33]

Actions Taken

The Beijing Platform for Action began in 1990 and was to promote education around the world to at least the primary school level, it lasted till 2000. One of the main things focused on was the education of women in particular, because even in places with adequate education for men women still went without any form of education, making this subject a high priority for those in the United Nations. "The Beijing Platform for Action commitments should be seen in the context of the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, at which the international community set the challenge of achieving universal primary education by the year 2000."[34]

In 2000 the World Education Forum set forth goals to promote education for all, two of the six goals focused on the education of women in particular. "In 2000, the World Education Forum in Dakar reviewed achievements and again set time-specific goals, known as the Education for All goals".[35] The two goals set forth dealing with equal access to education were goal two and goal five. "Goal 2: Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality."[36] As one can tell the United Nations has been focusing on the issue of gender and ethnic peoples being discriminated against or left out when it comes to education.

The outcome of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" called for policies that guarantee equal access to education and the elimination of gender disparities in education, including vocational training, science and technology, and ensure quality education and improved enrolment and retention rates.[36]

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) also state the importance that everyone be able to have access to education in two of the goals. MDG2 focuses on universal primary education, and restates the 2015 target for girls and boys alike to complete a full course of primary schooling.[37] One of the specific targets for MDG3 on gender equality and women's empowerment reflects the commitments in both the Beijing Platform for Action and Education for All to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005." [38] While the global community fell short of reaching universal primary education, great strides have been made as the number of children not in school decreased by almost half and primary education rates rose almost 11%. [39] Furthermore, the MDGs have increased the proportion of women to men in the classroom from 91:100 to 96:100.[40]

"The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) is a partnership of organizations committed to narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary education."[41] The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) is one of the key groups that the United Nations created to deal with the injustice of girls worldwide not having access to rudimentary education at least. The UNGEI was created in 2000 at the World Education Forum and adopted on June 13, 2008 its formal statement of what they hope to accomplish a world where all girls and boys are empowered through quality education to realize their full potential and contribute to transforming societies where gender equality becomes a reality.[42]

The United Nations Charter has this phrase in it "faith in the equal rights of men and women", which makes the issue of women's education one that cannot be ignored. "The status of human rights, including the goal of equality between women and men, is thereby elevated: a matter of ethics becomes a contractual obligation of all Governments and of the UN."[43]

One of the new Sustainable Development Goals' (SDG's) main focus is education. Goal 4 which deals with education broadly can be summarized to say the following: "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning". This goal is very broad and anyone can see the term "anyone" in it meaning women, men, and anything else one may consider themselves. Goal 4 includes several targets to specifically address how to ensure the goal is met including ensuring equal access to education for women and eliminating gender disparities .[44]

Conclusion

The importance of providing women access to education is something that all nations should come to understand. The fact that two thirds of illiterate people in the world are women is unacceptable. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) goal 4 is to "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning".

Committee Directive

The basic human right to education and the United Nations Charter that states "faith in equal rights of men and women" makes the issue of women's education an issue for the world. This issue should not be an issue but something that makes the global community as a better and more educated place which will lead the world into a more peaceful and secure future. As mentioned earlier the United Nations has many committees and programs already in place to help us achieve equal education for all but as shown it has had a limited effect, therefore delegates it is your job to examine the structures already in place and think of new ideas to help achieve the goal of education for all.

Other issues for you to consider include things like how to get more women into science and math education and jobs, and how to overcome the boundaries some Member States might encounter due to cultural, economic, or any other factors.

III. Coordinating Effective Humanitarian Aid between NGO's and State Actors for Disaster Response

Introduction

The topic of humanitarian aid and how best to administer it has come into the spotlight due to developing political turmoil and ever-frequent natural disasters. People displaced and affected by these disasters have basic needs like medical attention, food, water, shelter, and security. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the inherent dignity, equality and inalienable rights of all global citizens; as such, Member States have recognized humanitarian aid as crucial to the sustainability of the civilized world. [45] Humanitarian aid assists and helps alleviate suffering of those affected by natural or man-made disasters in order to protect their dignity and help maintain stability. Disasters can strike anywhere at any time, whether it be natural disasters like hurricanes and mudslides, or man-made disasters such as political or financial turmoil. It is imperative that we do everything in our power to coordinate this aid quickly and efficiently with humanity, neutrality, and impartiality. With disasters occurring more frequently and on larger scales, the global community needs to strengthen and adapt the way it coordinates humanitarian aid to ensure a rapid and sufficient response.

Providing humanitarian aid is such a pressing and multi-faceted issue that not one agent can adequately manage these efforts alone. Various agencies of the United Nations, governments of Member States, as well as non-governmental organizations all administer this aid to meet humanitarian needs. In order to best address the growing humanitarian needs our world faces, non-governmental agencies and state actors must work together and pool all available resources and expertise. The existing framework within the United Nations attempts to coordinate all of these actors; the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is the part of the vast secretariat that coordinates current efforts between national and international actors.[46] However, growing demands require more comprehensive, cohesive, and streamlined measures to ensure effective humanitarian aid.

Successfully implementing humanitarian aid efforts depend on adequate funding; currently, the Central Emergency Response Funds and Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) manage financing of various organizations that provide aid. These funds pool contributions from governments, charities, companies, and non-governmental agencies and administer them on an as-needed basis with priority going to most-affected areas.[47] Not to be forgotten are the invaluable contributions of individuals dedicated to combating humanitarian crises. Growing humanitarian aid needs demand additional funding and innovative financing solutions to keep up pace.

Background

Disasters and the resulting humanitarian crises have long plagued the world; coordinated efforts to combat these situations started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Northern China and India suffered serious famine in the late 1800s which led to the establishment of The Shandong Famine Relief Committee, the first multi-lateral approach to providing aid. [48] Humanitarian aid continued without widespread famine in Ethiopia from 1983-1985 spurred international action towards combining resources and means of combating such crises.[49] Pressure for a globalized response system with the capabilities to address large-scale humanitarian crises led to the establishment of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in 1991.

Since its foundation, OCHA has been tasked with some of the world's most troubling crises. The Rwandan Genocide of 1994 created over 2 million refugees (mostly Tutsis) fleeing from persecution by the Hutus.[50] Other man-made disasters that tested the ability of the global community to respond with effective humanitarian aid include the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the violence in Darfur, the Iraq war, and most recently the Syrian civil war.[51] Furthermore, natural disasters have steadily become more frequent and more intense, adding to complexity of providing humanitarian aid. An earthquake and the subsequent tsunami devastated the Indian Ocean region and millions of people belonging to several different member states in that region in 2004; non-governmental organizations and Member states alike rose to the occasion and ultimately provided over $14 billion in humanitarian aid.[52] Similar to the situation seen in 2004, the world suffered tremendously with the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Haiti earthquake of 2010. Widespread droughts in East Africa and Sahel from 2010-2011 also caused a disastrous humanitarian aid crisis that depended upon the global community's intervention. Most argue that the impact of these disasters was diminished thanks to the overwhelming support and very carefully planned disaster response and humanitarian aid efforts coordinated through OCHA and the organizations it coordinates to administer the aid.

Current Situation

The current state of affairs in our world reminds us of why coordinating effective humanitarian aid to disasters is so important. Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2014, over 7 million people have been displaced throughout the world with 13.5 million in need of humanitarian assistance. [53] The global community still seeks to fully grasp control of the refugee crisis as resources and frameworks have been strained in efforts to provide adequate humanitarian aid. The United Nations has asked for $5 billion, the largest request for a single incident since its inception, in order to meet the enormous humanitarian demand including basic food, water, shelter, and medical care. Fighting in Syria recently spilled over into Iraq, displacing another 4 million people and leaving 8.6 more in need of aid.[54] OCHA reports another 4.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance due to the fighting within Sudan.[53] These numbers continuously grow as the conflicts continue to rage on with no end in sight. Ongoing droughts in Somalia and Central America are responsible for another 3.5 million people that require humanitarian aid.[56] It is also believed that climate change and the human effect on the environment has contributed to the drastic increase the frequency of occurrence and magnitude of natural disasters; these natural disasters can happen at any time and threaten to overload the current response capabilities of the global community. If the way in which we manage disaster response and dispense aid does not improve and become more efficient, the

global community faces the prospect of not being able to effectively address growing needs, leaving millions of people across the world without basic necessities or dignity.

Actions Taken

In 1991, The United Nations mandated the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.[57]   A funding mechanism, or the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, was also created in 1991 under OCHA to aggregate donations and create a plan for how to disburse the funds most accordingly.[58] The Central Emergency Revolving Fund continued to expand in size, scope, and capabilities through multiple resolutions in order to effectively and rapidly respond to disasters. In 2005, Member States passed Res/60/124 and upgraded the Central Emergency Revolving Fund into the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).[59] Upgrades included a grant element for more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies along with provisions for strengthening humanitarian response to underfunded crises. Several UN resolutions have passed since 2005, including RES/61/134, RES/62/94, and A/63/L.49 that continuously urge donors to step up and provide more money, aid, and resources, in proportion to the growing global need.[60] In 2015, a new set of Sustainable Development Goals were introduced; these goals are meant to set ambitious goals for the UN to achieve by 2030. Of these broad goals, the first three call for an end to poverty, an end to hunger, and to ensure the health and well-being for all.[61] By making these the top three goals to reach by 2030, the UN has prioritized increasing the quality of living for individuals, a task which relies upon effective humanitarian aid.

Conclusion

The growing humanitarian aid needs of the world call for further cooperation between state actors and non-governmental organizations to effectively address disaster response. While the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is responsible for coordinating aid between these actors, the multilateral approach can be strengthened and expanded upon to ensure those affected by disasters receive timely and effective aid.

Committee Directive

Delegates should find creative ways to build off of existing framework within the United Nations to more effectively coordinate humanitarian aid efforts between state actors and non-governmental organizations. International framework should be examined as well as potential regional and sub-regional solutions. Furthermore, delegates should explore innovative financing mechanisms other than asking for increased contributions from Member States.

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