

The Secretariat

CHMUN XIX

Specialized Agency

Committee Background:

Oftentimes when the United Nations is mentioned, what comes to mind is the typical General Assembly: a conglomeration of Member States discussing current and pressing issues with the end goal of creating resolutions to them that apply, although noncommittally, on both the regional and global levels. And while this is indeed a large and critical aspect of the role the UN plays in international affairs, there is another side to the organization: The Secretariat.

Headed by the Secretary-General, António Guterres, the Secretariat is the hidden engine of the UN, carrying out day-to-day tasks that have been dictated to them by the General Assembly and other subsidiary bodies. Although the UN has its headquarters in New York City, it has a network of hundreds of offices across the world and thousands of staff members from various backgrounds. It is the duty of the Secretariat, the leading task-force of the UN, to maintain the structure of their respective divisions, to oversee the enforcement of passed resolutions, and to be the changemakers their job requires them to be, acting as pioneers, conductors of progress, and healers.

The Secretariat is similar to a board in that it is departmentalized, represented by what the UN calls ‘Under-Secretary-Generals’; however, it is dissimilar in that it isn’t just a group of people; it’s all the staffers, the representatives, and even the very entities of the various departments and their subsequent offices. A department, led by a Director, is the highest tier of management in the Secretariat, with broad roles and responsibilities such as Global Communications or Peace Operations. Within each department are offices, led by a Chief, which focus on more specific areas of their department, such as Outreach or Justice and Corrections, respectively.

But after decades of serving the global public, the UN, and by extension the Secretariat, faces a problem. There are many unsatisfied with, even opposed to, the actions (or lack thereof), the organization has taken to settle disputes, improve lives, and preserve the environment. It is your job to respond with out-of-the-box, creative, intricate, and practical solutions. This committee is admittedly broad. There are a lot of facets to each topic, many of which are not covered in this background guide. In designing this committee, we wanted it to be challenging, to force delegates to look at the UN from

CHMUN XIX 2



a different perspective—not as the ‘good guy’ it is typically seen as—and to see the flaws and shortcomings. So tackle this committee in a unique way that works for you; there is no wrong answer. Maybe that means zooming in on a unique and particular aspect of the topic; or maybe it means taking a birds-eye-view of multiple sub-topics, finding commonalities, and creating resolutions that will kill two birds with one stone; or maybe you look at just what your position would focus on. But most importantly, have fun with it!



Topic A: Responding to Dissidence Within and Against the UN's Operations

Introduction

On November 25th, 2019, UN peacekeepers stationed in Beni, a town in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), were attacked, along with their offices, cars, and bases. The perpetrators? The very people the peacekeepers were supposed to be protecting from a militant group based in Uganda called the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). The peacekeepers are part of a mission called MONUSCO, a Peacekeeping Operation (PSO) still enforced today. MONUSCO is intended to provide stability in the region which is plagued by violent conflict between the ADF and the Congolese military (FARDC). When the FARDC launched an all-out campaign against the ADF, they responded with frequent attacks against civilians—including the ones in Beni. The people of Beni were angry, not just at the upheaval of their routine lives, but at the UN peacekeepers, who in their eyes were failing at shielding them from the onslaught.

The protestors were justified in their frustration with the perceived failure of the UN, as the peacekeepers truly weren't doing as much as they could have. MONUSCO's primary goal is to protect civilians in the region, and it created the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) to do so, an armed force meant to neutralize militant threats. Despite this, peacekeepers were rarely seen fighting alongside the FARDC, and thus the people of Beni saw the FIB as a construct hiding behind a facade of action. But there are logistical hurdles that prevent and restrict what peacekeepers on any mission are able to do. For example, the FIB must always adhere to the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP), which prevents any UN entity from supporting non-UN entities when they have violated international humanitarian law, which the FARDC had done on numerous occasions. The peacekeepers, in following UN guidelines, were not able to partner with the FARDC, even for the purposes of fending off attacks from the ADF. While not an excuse for inaction, it certainly brings to light first, the lack of communication between peacekeepers and civilians of the regulations in place, and second, the contradictions and faults inherent in these regulations that prevent the UN from carrying out its very own missions successfully.



This is one story, one instance of failed peacekeeping, one group of people who didn't receive the protections they deserved. One, of many. It's a story that can be seen time and time again, from the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, Kashmir, Somalia, and Sudan to the genocides of Cambodia, Rwanda, and Rohingya. So the question remains: how can Peacekeeping Operations be improved to deliver a larger, more positive impact, close to 100 percent of the time?

Questions to Consider

1. What current PSO regulations are in place?
2. How should PSO regulations be amended to reflect the nuance in modern-day conflicts?
3. PSOs are just one source of dissent against the UN. What are some others, and how should the Secretariat respond?

Helpful Links

1. United Nations News: "Does UN Peacekeeping Work? Here's what the Data Says"
 - a. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/12/1131552>
2. Friends of Europe: "We Need UN Peacekeeping, so How can we Make it Better?"
 - a. <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/we-need-un-peacekeeping-so-how-can-we-make-it-better/>
3. JSTOR: "UN Peacekeeping: How Should We Measure Success?"
 - a. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/222731>
4. Voice of America News: "Poor Nations' Leaders Unleash Anger, Despair at UN Summit"
 - a. <https://www.voanews.com/a/poor-nations-leaders-unleash-anger-despair-at-un-summit/6990678.html>



Topic B: Democratizing the UN's Subsidiary Organs

The war in the Ukraine has been ongoing for almost 2 years now, though it is only an escalation of a conflict that has been raging for over 9 years. Amongst all of the violence and bloodshed, the images of ruined cities and dislocated civilians and children buried under rubble, the war has shown light upon two crucial facts: one, the UN Security Council has made little to no strides to end the war, and two, in lieu of direct action, the UN has showcased its inextricable ability to provide humanitarian aid to vulnerable peoples. But, the UN has its limits; it can't act as a lifeline to this one particular region of the world forever, and without the agency of killing the issue at its roots, the UN will exhaust the resources it has to support these victims.

After numerous pleas by President Zelensky himself and the very apparent injustice of the particular conflict, the debate on reforming the UN Security Council has been reignited. The organ, which consists of 15 members, including the Permanent 5 Members of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia, was established after World War II as a means to police the world's affairs. But to persuade the other P5 members to join, Roosevelt was forced to codify a veto power given to the permanent members into the UN Charter. It is this very veto power that is both causing a need for reform, and preventing it at the same time. The veto makes the Security Council a very powerful force when all P5 nations are in agreement, but dilutes itself into just a discussion room when one of the interests of a P5 nation is threatened. The problem is, no member wants to give up their veto power, even if in one instance it would further their agenda.

Moving on from the Security Council, there have been advocates of democratization of the entirety of the UN as well, most notably Albert Einstein. What he proposed was the General Assembly be made up of elected delegations, with each delegate responsible for voicing the positions of their electorate. He hoped that not only would people have more representation in international affairs, but that delegates would be given the freedom to be a champion for the people as opposed to being diplomats with the interests of a nation, not necessarily a nation's populus, in mind. However, Einstein was a physicist, not a political scientist, and he received criticism from both the US and the Soviet



Union for his opinion, but nonetheless it is an interesting concept, one that plays at something truly important to the UN's values: self-determination.

Einstein's early thoughts have transformed and evolved into the modern day campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly. This idea would promote democracy on the international level, giving power back to people living in both urban and rural areas of the world. Additionally, it would provide people without national representation a chance to have an impact on affairs that may affect them. Unfortunately, the impracticality of this idea means a lot more thought would need to go into its creation. For example, how would citizens of nations without fair elections be able to vote, given the lack of electoral infrastructure in place. Or what would happen if nations sent delegations not truly elected by the people? A Parliamentary Assembly is a start. It's a great idea. But much thought must be put into it for it to be improved to a level where it could actually be implemented.

Questions to Consider

1. Should the UN Security Council undergo reform?
 - a. If so, what would that reform look like?
 - b. How would that reform be carried out?
2. What other bodies of the UN besides the Security Council need to be democratized?
3. How can the UN as a whole reflect the interests of a global people in a greater capacity?

Helpful Links

1. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: "UN Security Council Reform: What the World Thinks"
 - a. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/06/28/un-security-council-reform-what-world-thinks-pub-90032>
2. Inclusive Society Institute: "Democratising the United Nations"
 - a. <https://www.inclusivesociety.org.za/post/democratising-the-united-nations>

CHMUN XIX 7



3. Council of Councils: “The UN Turns Seventy-Five. Here’s How to Make it Relevant Again”
 - a. <https://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global-memos/un-turns-seventy-five-heres-how-make-it-relevant-again>



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