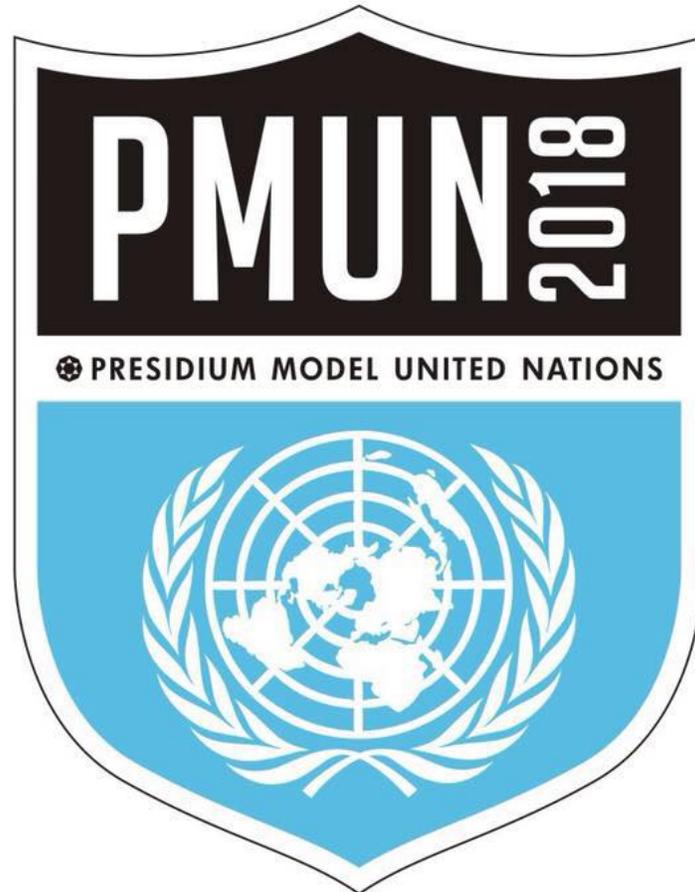


Presidium Model United Nations Conference 2018



PRESIDIUM *for*
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Background Guide 1: Primer about the Committee

Letter From the Executive Board

Respected Delegates

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you to this session of the Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. The item under discussion for this session of the 73rd committee is the Elimination of all forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance.

The issues relating to racism and racial discrimination came to the forefront during the apartheid regime in South Africa. Since then, substantial progress has been made in the area of human rights being granted to all human beings irrespective of their race, religion, color, caste or gender. These rights are promised and codified in multiple international legal instruments, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights being the foremost document. Though the stains of racism and racial discrimination might have been eradicated from institutions and constitutions of different countries on paper, it is no surprise that cases of racism and institutional discrimination emerge in our societies, albeit in a more disguised manner.

For this session of the Social, Cultural and Humanitarian committee, I intend to focus our attention to lingering issues of racism and intolerance in our societies through in-depth research and then come up with concrete solutions to address the same.

Let's shift gears here and understand the research pattern and the method to exploit the most out of this Background Guide. The Background Guide has been split into multiple sub-parts, each sub-part explaining an important aspect related to the agenda before the committee. Furthermore, note that this Background Guide is to be read in conjunction to the articles and videos uploaded on the microsite dedicated to our committee. I am attaching the link to the microsite at the end of the letter for the reference of all delegates.

The EB has also uploaded a Research Tabulation Excel Sheet. This Research tabulation excel sheet is optional and is not going to be marked at all. But it helps delegates put their research in one place and in a more structured manner. Please do go through the Research Tabulation Sheet and message the EB in case of doubts.

Best Regards

Executive Board
Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Committee
73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Introduction to the Committee

The purpose of this section of the Background Guide is to understand the mandate and functioning of the Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. During Model UN Conferences, delegates tend to focus most of their time researching on the agenda and in doing so ignore reading about the committee itself.

The first order of business for an effective delegate should be understanding the mandate and functioning of the committee before digging deeper into the agenda. One of the main pitfalls of delegates during committee sessions is that most of the solutions contained in the draft resolution cannot be acted upon just because those actions do not fall under the jurisdiction of that committee. It is important to understand the actions our committee can and cannot undertake before researching upon the committee agenda.

The United Nations General Assembly was established in 1945 through the Charter of the United Nations. In the entire United Nations framework, the General Assembly occupies a central position as the chief deliberative and representative organ of the United Nations. Comprising of all 193 Members of the United Nations, it offers member states a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of regional and international issues that fall under purview of the Charter. The committee also caters to a significant role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law.

The mandate and main functions of the United Nations General assembly are enshrined in Chapter 4 of the United Nations Charter. Under the Charter, the committee has the power to make recommendations to States on international issues within its competence. It has, in the past initiated actions on political, economic, humanitarian, social and legal issues through its sub committees to protect the interests of millions of people across the globe.

Consensus in the Committee Proceedings

Each of the Member States in the United Nations General assembly has one vote. Certain designated important issues — such as recommendations on issues relating to peace and security, the election of member states to the Security Council and Economic and Social Council and setting the budget of the United Nations — require a two-thirds majority of member States. Other questions and items under discussion are passed through a simple majority.

In recent time, an effort has been made to garner consensus on issues rather than passing proposals and resolutions through a formal voting process,, thus strengthening support for the assembly's decisions. In such situations, the President of the committee, after having consulted and reached agreement with delegations, can propose a resolution be adopted without a vote.

Sessions of the Committee

The sessions of the United Nations General Assembly take place in the form of **Regular Sessions** and sometimes in form of **Special Sessions and Emergency Special Sessions**. The information about the meetings of the General Assembly (both regular sessions and irregular sessions) are mentioned in Part I of the **Rules of Procedure** document of the UN General assembly.

1. Regular Sessions:

United Nations General Assembly meets bi-annual basis the year, first from September to December, and then resumes session in January until all issues on the agenda are addressed – which often is just before the next session starts. During the resumed part of the session, the assembly considers current issues of critical importance to the international community in the form of High-level Thematic Debates.

Note: Please note that for this Model United Nations Conference, we are simulating a “**Regular Session**” of the United Nations General Assembly.

2. Special Sessions:

The assembly can also take action in cases of a threat to the peace, breach of peace or act of aggression through a **Special Session or an Emergency Special Sessions**. Under Rule of Procedure of the committee, a **Special Session** can be convened if the United Nations Secretary General receives such a request from the members of the UNSC under **Rule 8** or a from a majority of members of the United Nations under **Rule 9**.

3. Emergency Special Sessions:

In cases where the Security Council has failed to act because of a deadlock in the council or a negative vote of a permanent member of the UNSC, a **Emergency Special Sessions** of the General assembly can be convened pursuant to Uniting for Peace Resolution of November 1950. Such a session shall be convened upon the request for such a session by the UNSC through nine affirmative votes or a request from a majority of the Members of the United Nations.

Please note that the information contained on Special Sessions and Emergency Special Sessions is not important for this simulation. I am putting this information in the guide for educational and learning purposes of the delegates.

Functions and Powers of the Committee

Though there is a lot of literature on the roles and responsibilities of the United Nations General Assembly, let's just focus on the main areas of function and responsibilities of the committee. The Functions and Powers of the United Nations General Assembly are mentioned in Chapter 4 of the United Nations Charter. I recommend delegates to scan through Chapter 4 at least one time to get a grasp about the functioning of the committee. The language used in the UN Charter can be technical and difficult to command for first timers and therefore I am also stating the same functions and powers of the committee in simpler language.

- ❖ Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States;
- ❖ Elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General;
- ❖ Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament;
- ❖ Discuss any question relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is currently being discussed by the Security Council, make recommendations on it;
- ❖ Discuss, with the same exception, and make recommendations on any questions within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations;
- ❖ Initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international collaboration in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and health fields;
- ❖ Make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among countries;
- ❖ Consider reports from the Security Council and other United Nations organs.
- ❖ Offer recommendations to member states to maintain or restore international peace and security in case of Special Sessions or Emergency Special Sessions of the Committee pursuant to the "Uniting for Peace" Resolution of the United Nations.

Main Committees of the General Assembly

The United Nations General Assembly is a unique multilateral forum but it is impossible for one committee to discuss and deliberate upon political, social, cultural, economic and legal issues all at once. The General Assembly can establish sub-committees as it deems important for the efficient performance of its functions. Therefore under **Rule 98 of the Rules of Procedures** of the UN General assembly, there are 6 main committees:

1. First Committee: Disarmament and International Security Committee
2. Second Committee: Economic and Financial Committee
3. Third Committee: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee
4. Fourth Committee: Special Political and Decolonization Committee
5. Fifth Committee: administrative and Budgetary Committee
6. Sixth Committee: Legal Committee

For this session of the United Nations General Assembly, we shall be performing the role of the 3rd Committee i.e the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee.

Social Cultural Humanitarian Committee

The General assembly allocates to the 3rd Committee, agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that affect people.

Some of the agenda's that fall under its scope could be:

1. Promoting the Rights of Women
2. Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Children
3. Treatment of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons
4. Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

There are a lot of other agenda's that fall under the scope of the 3rd Committee. The list is endless. The 4th agenda mentioned in the list is our topic of discussion for Presidium Model United Nations Conference i.e Elimination of all forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance.

The Committee also addresses important social and cultural development questions such as issues related to children, ageing, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control.