First Committee

**Topic A: Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space**

During the 71st Session of the General Assembly, the body continued its efforts on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) through the implementation of transparency and confidence building measures (TCBM). In December 2016, the General Assembly adopted three resolutions regarding “preventing an arms race into outer space” (A/RES/71/31), “no first placement of weapons in outer space” (A/RES/71/32), “transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities” (A/RES/42). The resolutions reiterate the importance of international cooperation on PAROS measures and encourage engagement with existing TCBMs. Furthermore, a special emphasis is placed on commitments to the “no first placement of weapons in outer space” policy. In committee, opponents to A/RES/71/32 cited the continued lack of both a definition of space weapons and a legal instrument to ensure compliance with TCBMs.

**Topic B: Measures to Prevent Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction**

In September, a summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement in Venezuela expressed a continued commitment to combating international terrorism and expressed hope that measures of terrorism prevention be codified in a Comprehensive Convention for Combating International Terrorism. Continuing in the spirit of international cooperation in the battle against terrorism, the General Assembly’s 71st Session resulted in the unanimous adoption of resolutions A/RES/38 and A/RES/66, entitled “Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destructions,” and “Preventing the acquisition by terrorists of radioactive sources,” respectively. The resolutions reiterated the importance of a concerted international effort in the prevention of terrorist acquisitions of WMDs, their means of delivery, and materials and technologies related to their manufacture. Additionally, the resolutions urge all Member States to consider early accession to and ratification of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. The documents stress the importance of the work of the IAEA in the creation of such security measures. The Security Council intensified its efforts to ensure the development of a secure international framework to prevent the terrorist acquisition of WMDs. In the face of rapid technological advances and increasingly ambitious malefactors, the General Assembly passed Resolution 2325 to address this area of concern.
Topic A: International Cooperation on Information and Communication Technologies for Development

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) released the 2016 Measuring the Information Society Report in November. The report features key information and communication technologies (ICT) data used to analyze trends and developments in the digital divide, including the ICT Development Index (IDI). In 2016, nearly all countries increased their IDI rankings, but there remains significant disparities between the growth in more or less connected countries. Further, ICT use is growing faster than ICT access, resulting in a continued need for international efforts to expand access in developing and least developed countries. Reaffirming its commitment to bridging digital and knowledge divides, the General Assembly adopted A/RES/71/212 by consensus in December. The resolution on ICTs for development stress the need for enhanced participation of Governments and stakeholders from all developing countries, with an emphasis on those states classified as least developed.

Topic B: Promotion of Sustainable Tourism, Including Ecotourism, for Poverty Eradication and Environmental Protection

The General Assembly passed A/RES/71/467 regarding ecotourism; it stressed the need to optimize economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits of sustainable tourism, especially in African, least developed and small island developing States. Further, it reaffirmed the link between sustainable tourism and sustainable development, particularly in regards to the utilization of biodiversity and natural resources. The Assembly also passed A/RES/71/223, which emphasizes the importance of seeking innovative and coordinated approaches in integrating the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development at the global, regional and national levels through the implementation of Agenda 21.
**Third Committee**

**Topic A: Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

In October, the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture, Juan E. Méndez, presented a report to the General Assembly in which he advocated for the creation of a universal set of standards for non-coercive interviewing methods and procedural safeguards with the goal of reducing the risk for torture, intimidation, coercion, and mistreatment. These standards need to be implemented by bodies with investigative mandates, including law enforcement officials, military, and intelligence personnel. Despite the progress made on the elimination of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment through the passage of the Mandela Rules, implementation remains a challenge. A number of States refuse to allow United Nations’ anti-torture investigators to inspect detention facilities. As concerns over matters of national security grow, some States defend their right to use whatever interrogation and detainment procedures they see fit, regardless of existing anti-torture agreements. The current consensus against torture remains fragile with certain states displaying a blatant disregard for anti-torture measures.

**Topic B: Means of Implementation of the 5th Sustainable Development Goal**

The General Assembly passed several resolutions addressing the empowerment of women and girls, including resolutions regarding: trafficking in women and girls (A/RES/71/167), intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation (A/RES/71/168), and intensifying global efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, domestic violence (A/RES/71/170). These resolutions represent only a small part of the larger effort towards the empowerment of women and girls taking place throughout the entire United Nations institution. UN Women estimates that without invention, it will take 170 years for women to achieve equal economic opportunity as compared to men. In order to reduce that time frame, Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, will attend the 47th Annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) from 17-21 January to promote women’s economic empowerment and engagement in business. With the help of UN Women and dedicated grassroots movements that work towards increasing women’s involvement in politics, female representation in politics has increased globally.
Topic A: Criminal Accountability of United Nations Peacekeepers on Mission

The General Assembly unanimously passed a resolution regarding the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission. The resolution (A/RES/71/134) welcomes the appointment of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and requests that the Secretary-General regularly update Member States on the progress of the implementation of the mandate of the Special Coordinator. Emphasis is placed on the importance of Member States taking appropriate measures to investigate and prosecute crimes committed by troops they contribute. Despite increased transparency measures by the UN and the Organization’s commitment to due process and the carriage of justice, the UN is still powerless in ensuring appropriate legal measures are taken. After a lengthy investigation, on January 6th, a panel of French judges opted not to bring charges against French soldiers accused of sexual misconduct while on mission in Central African Republic (CAR). The case will not be formally closed for four months, allowing for the presentation of further evidence, but the declination to bring charges against the soldiers continues to bring additional scrutiny on the willingness of States to shoulder the legal responsibility of prosecuting offenses perpetrated by their citizens. Moreover, new allegations surfaced last summer accusing Congolese peacekeepers of murders by torture, public executions, and beating deaths in the CAR.

Topic B: Responsibility of States for Wrongful Acts

A growing number of international courts, tribunals, and other bodies continue to refer to articles on the responsibility of states for internationally wrongful acts. As such, the General Assembly passed A/RES/71/133, which included a request that the Secretary-General prepare a technical report listing references to the articles contained in the compilation of decisions of international courts, tribunals and other bodies referring to the articles prepared since 2001. Furthermore, the Assembly requested that the Secretary-General provide the body with all of its procedural options regarding the issue at its 74th session, and encouraged the continuation of constructive dialog in the Sixth Committee working group with an informal discourse between nations on the subject until such time when that report is made available.
Topic A: Biodiversity and Food Security

On December 3, 2016, 190 nations met in Cancun, Mexico at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to Convention on Biological Diversity, also known as “COP13.” The states that were party to the conference promised to increase their efforts to incorporate steps that adhere to biological diversity into the major policies of their forestry, fishery, tourism, and agricultural sectors. Later deemed the Cancun Declaration, the declaration is a landmark acknowledgement from the global community that the preservation of biodiversity should incorporate government, economic, and environmental offices. Throughout the two day High-Level Segment of the meeting, participating countries discussed how the fisheries, tourism, forestry, and agricultural sectors can include biodiversity into account and specifically how countries can contribute to protection and conservation efforts. States in addition to their commitments to the Cancun Declaration, vowed to accelerate internal actions to meet the Targets’ deadline in less than four years.

Topic B: Substance abuse and its impact on global health

The World Health Organization will come together to discuss the public health dimension of the world drug problem during its 140th session of the Executive Board in January 2017. The topic of discussion will be “Public health dimension of the world drug problem” as decided upon in its previous meeting in May 2016. Previously, the 2016 Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the World Drug Problem produced the outcome document at this special session A/RES/S-30/1. Additionally, at the 69th Session Document A69/1 emphasized the critical public health elements of a comprehensive and balanced drug policy, as well as the WHO’s role in implementing the recommendations of the UNGASS special assembly. Lastly, in preparation for the Executive Board meeting in January 2017, the Board has released EB 140/29 on the public health aspect of the world drug problem. The report will cover the most recent sessions, the drug-related health targets of Sustainable Goal 3, and the outcomes of thematic discussions held at international forums to promote the implementation of the operational recommendations.

Topic C: Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, full employment, and decent work for all, and social integration
On January 12, 2017, the United Nations International Labour Organization (ILO) issued its findings in the 2017 World Employment and Social Outlook report. Some of the findings in the report were indicative of a series of negative trends in global employment and the rise in unemployment with a widening gap in social inequality throughout 2017. The report also highlighted the decline in growth domestic product with a six year low, far below the projected rate for 2015. Academics and forecasters predict that in 2017 global unemployment is expected to rise by 3.4 million; such decline is expected to be at 5.7-5.8 percent which is due to a deteriorating labour market conditions that are taking place in emerging countries. However, unemployment is expected to decrease in much of the developed world. People living in poverty has decreased in most recent years, but rates of progress have begun to slow and are predicted to fade in 2017.
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Topic A: Corporate Social Responsibility and the Environment

Since the enactment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a new report on Universality and the SDGs: A Business Perspective, the Sustainable Development Goal Fund (SDG Fund) urges the necessity of universality as an enhancer to engagement with the private sector. The SDG Fund stated that, “Universality in this context is applicable to all countries, while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development that respect national policies and principles.” However, the SDG Fund also noted that many corporations and firms are working to incorporate the SDGs, some of the work is not always attributed to the Goals. Additionally, the report indicated that for most firms, corporate social responsibility initiatives remain “customary,” thereby framing sustainability initiatives through the SDGs could offer great benefits given that such firms provide a series of unified goals and targets.

Topic B: Commodity Dependent Developing Countries

The global financial system is still at risk for developing countries that would send shockwaves through the system and thereby leaving poorer states vulnerable to falling commodity prices and high interest rates. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development issued a warning in its yearly report that some of the debt relief that many developing countries received during earlier decades is rapidly fading. The report also indicated that a “prolonged price shock, steep currency depreciations and worsening growth prospects in a deteriorating global economic environment have quickly driven up borrowing costs and debt-to-GDP ratios.” Meetings between the IMF and the World Bank were held in Washington, D.C. in October of 2016. UNCTAD expects to see a steady growth of 2.8% or higher in the African continent slightly less than the recorded 6.7% recorded in 2010.

Topic C: Access to markets for rural populations

The World Bank’s 2016 report entitled, “Measuring Rural Access Using new technologies” addressed the issue of the lack of transport connectivity as an essential part of the environment necessary that is conducive for sustained growth. Many of the developing countries in Africa, farmers are still unable to have access to local, regional, and global markets. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to create an infrastructure that is reliable enough to support economic development. Further initiatives are underway with several collaborative
partners. The World Bank partnered with the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom and the Research for Community Access Partnership to create a new series of initiatives to measure access in rural areas that is sustainable, consistent, and operational.
**Topic A: Improving international cooperation in burden sharing**

In 2016, the High Commissioner for Refugees addressed the General Assembly’s Third Committee on Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs in regards to the status of burden sharing. Specifically within the Commissioner’s address, the fate of refugees within the international community remains the most defining challenge of the present day. Since the report issued by the High Commissioner in September of the same year, data from the Syrian war indicate that nearly 6.5 million Syrians have been internally displaced while 4.8 million more have become refugees thereby creating the world’s largest humanitarian crisis to date. In order to respond to such crises in a timely and adequate manner, the Commissioner state that partnerships between all relevant humanitarian and development actors must provide adequate resources as well as a better distribution of refugees among countries to avoid the threat of overburdening those countries willing to allow refugees to reside in their borders.

**Topic B: International cooperation on voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugees**

The General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/71/L.1) on 19 September 2016. Within the Declaration, Member States agreed to a series of commitments in which the signatories to the Declaration would recognize a shared spirit of responsibility, manage large movements of refugees and migrants in a “humane, sensitive, and compassionate and people-centered manner.” Throughout the gathering, representatives from various Member States spoke about the need for more efforts to enhance voluntary repatriation and successful reintegration of refugees; specifically, the lack of appropriate financing which is currently hindering the efforts to repatriate and integrate refugees back into their countries of origin.

**Topic C: Situation of and assistance to environmental refugees and internally displaced persons affected by natural disasters and climate change**

The Paris climate agreement which came into force on Wednesday 21 September 2016. With a total of 60 countries present, the agreement was formally signed; 55 nations were required to sign the deal in order for the agreement to be fully enacted. Target goals for the agreement and its signatories’ commitments mean that Member States pledged to limit the global temperature
rise to 2C above pre-industrial levels with an aspiration of keeping such levels at 1.5C. Months later, the UN’s Marrakech Climate Change Conference further emphasized the urgency of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent more than those pledged at the Paris climate conference. The head of the UN Environment organization stated that “The growing number of climate refugees hit by hunger, poverty, illness, and conflict will be a constant reminder of our failure to deliver. The science shows that we need to move much faster.”
United Nations Security Council

**Topic A: Countering the Flow of Foreign Fighters to Combat Zones**

In line with S/RES/2253, which requires a report on the threat posed by the organization known as Da’esh or the Islamic State to the Security Council every four months, the Secretary General presented S/2016/830 to the Council on October 13, 2016. The report discussed foreign fighters in-depth, and for the first time highlighted the increasing issue of foreign fighters returning to their home countries, particularly to Europe and the Maghreb. The report also highlighted the emerging issue of foreign fighters directing terrorist attacks in their home country. Only a few Member States adopted new policies in response to these emerging issues; the reality that Da’esh and other groups utilizing foreign fighters, include new methods of travel, the use of encryption, and the “dark web” for communication. The Security Council’s counter-terrorism committee highlighted that there are challenges in international cooperation to prevent foreign fighter flow. Such challenges include, law enforcement, border control, and travel restrictions. The Secretary General’s report preceded the adoption of S/RES/2309 on September 22nd, which called for Member States to work within the International Civil Aviation Organization to review international security standards and help to prevent the travel of foreign fighters in and out of conflict zones. On December 12th, the Security Council adopted S/RES/2322, which, in addition to making recommendations on international cooperation in countering terrorism, further called on Member States to increasingly share information regarding foreign fighters and, when possible, decrease the classification level of information related to foreign fighters so that travel screeners and other lower-level security officials can better identify such individuals.

**Topic B: Peace and Security on the Korean Peninsula**

On September 9th, 2016, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) conducted its fifth nuclear test, registering a magnitude of 5.0. In October, the DPRK conducted two failed intermediate-range missile tests. These actions were undertaken in violation of existing Security Council resolutions, which in part led to the adoption of S/RES/2321. S/RES/2321 implemented new sanctions against the DPRK, limiting their coal exports and the transfer of dual-use items into the State, which could be used to further their illicit nuclear program. Also destabilizing the peninsula is the recent corruption scandal surrounding Park Geun-hye, who was under investigation throughout October and November for high levels of corruption before being impeached as Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea (ROK) on December 9th. The positions of the ROK continue as a result of the change in leadership, although in January new Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn discussed the escalating tensions on the peninsula and the plans by the ROK to, in the event of war, strike against Kim Jong Un, the Supreme Leader of the DPRK.
presidential elections of the United States in November mark a leadership change and foreign policy shift with an indication from President Donald Trump which indicate a more hostile stance towards the DPRK. International experts have indicated that it is likely that the DPRK will maintain its nuclear policy at the core of its security strategy throughout 2017 regardless of the shift in foreign policy.

**Topic C: Women, Peace, and Security**

In the later months of the year, there were many discussions about the possibility of a female head of the United Nations (UN). On October 13th, António Guterres, a man, was confirmed as Secretary General on October 13, 2016, one week before the UN announced Wonder Woman as an honorary ambassador for women and girls. Both of these events drew sharp criticisms from feminists and activists. On December 5th, the Security Council held a meeting to discuss linkages between S/RES/1325 on “Women, Peace and Security” and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Specifically, CEDAW Committee’s General Recommendation No. 30 provides guidelines on protecting women’s rights before, during, and after conflict. The open format meeting’s goal was to identify action steps for Member States to utilize CEDAW in their implementation of Security Council Resolutions. As a result of the meeting, the CEDAW Committee’s proposed methods for implementing and monitoring the Security Council resolutions were endorsed, with mixed responses from Member States, both on and off the Security Council. Several Member States expressed that implementation of the resolutions on women, peace, and security was far behind where it needed to be, while others expressed concern regarding what the scope of women, peace, and security agenda has become. On December 20th, the Security Council adopted S/RES/2331, the first Security Council resolution on human trafficking. In addition to highlighting the particular impact that human trafficking has on women, the resolution encouraged Member States to ensure that their national action plans on human trafficking and women, peace, and security are created in consultation with civil society and are mutually reinforcing.