Topic A: Nuclear Non-Proliferation in the Middle East

Since the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), most regions and States have worked against nuclear proliferation, including through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.¹ The Middle East has been a notable exception. The General Assembly (GA) has discussed the risk of nuclear proliferation in the region for over two decades and threat of a nuclear arms race in the region remains omnipresent. It is generally accepted that Israel possesses nuclear weapons, a reality that has been used as justification for some other States to establish nuclear programs. Principal among these is Iran, whose nuclear aspirations resulted in their adoption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with the United States, an agreement which would, ideally, halt nuclear weapons development and discourage a regional arms race.² In addition to Iranian nuclear development, the United Arab Emirates began building a nuclear reactor in 2012, and Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia have all expressed or begun work on developing nuclear power. Some experts see this as a first step towards nuclear-weapons development, while most of these States would argue that they are only pursuing peaceful uses of nuclear technology, a right which they are afforded by the NPT. International concern remains high, however, as if any one of these States, particularly Iran, developed a nuclear weapon, others would likely follow suit.³

Topic B: Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) was adopted in 1980 with the goal of halting the use of weapons that were deemed inhumane, even during war. The original convention included three Protocols banning the use of: non-detectable fragments; mines, booby-traps, and other devices; and incendiary weapons.⁴ Two additional Protocols were adopted later: one addressing blinding laser weapons and the other addressing explosive remnants of war. The GA has taken up the topic of the CCW every year since 1984, principally seeking to address weapons that cause civilian casualties and those that cause unjustifiable suffering to combatants.⁵ Recently, discussions have also included modern realities, including cluster munitions and lethal autonomous weapons systems, both of which change the moral landscape surrounding war. In his message to the Fifth Review Conference of High Contracting Parties to the CCW in 2016, the Secretary-General stated that “Our world is increasingly subjected to a form of warfare conducted with unprecedented numbers of weapons and resulting in disastrous civilian casualties…to further prohibit and regulate certain types of conventional weapons over the next five years will have a significant impact on the prevention of human suffering.”⁶

References:

³ Ibid.
**General Assembly Second Committee Topic Summaries**

**Topic A: Ensuring Access to Affordable, Sustainable, and Reliable Energy for All**

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 7 to “Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy for All.” Access to energy is sometimes considered the building block to development, as it brings with it more productive hours each day, new technology, and often access to information.¹ The General Assembly (GA) has discussed access to energy many times, and in light of the *Paris Agreement* and discussions on the implementation of the SDGs, has renewed its focus on providing sustainable energy and increasing efficiency worldwide. Renewables, like solar and wind, remain a focus area for many United Nations (UN) initiatives, but international focus has shifted towards improving energy efficiency at lower levels of development, especially in rural areas. In some cases, this means training and educating on the use of charcoal as opposed to basic wood burning, or providing energy-efficient stoves.² In others, it involves working with communities to build new or connect to existing renewable power sources. Resources for ensuring access to energy remain limited, however, and energy reliability remains a subject area where little international action has been taken.

**Topic B: Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**

The *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* is a 15-year framework meant to provide guidance to States in preparing for and responding to natural disasters. Included in the framework are seven global targets, including reducing global disaster mortality, and four priorities for action, including investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience.³ Disaster risk reduction (DRR) and development have long been considered as interrelated, with infrastructure development inherently improving resilience and efforts to reduce the impact of disasters lessening the developmental impact of disasters when they occur.⁴ In terms of DRR, infrastructure development and improving resilience often take the bulk of resources, both nationally and internationally. However, technical and logistical aspects of DRR are of equal importance in the *Sendai Framework*. Many States lack not only the technical expertise to adequately prepare disaster response plans, but also the financial resources to have supplies and equipment at the ready. Some regional organizations have begun to develop mechanisms to help their members, but disasters are still recognized as massively detrimental to development, with low-income countries accounting for a vast majority of deaths and poverty caused by disasters.⁵ The international community still has a major role to play in supporting Member States in DRR, including in improving international mechanisms that will support the implementation of the *Sendai Framework*, such as early warning systems, training programs, and bodies that support the development of resilient infrastructure.

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General Assembly Third Committee Topic Summaries

**Topic A: Literacy, Education, and the Implementation of the Fourth Sustainable Development Goal**

The Fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) seeks to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.” Improving access to quality education has been on the agenda of the General Assembly (GA) for some time, and the Third Committee frequently discusses many topics that are now enshrined as targets for SDG4, such as achieving universal access to primary and secondary education, improving gender parity in education, and increasing global literacy rates. These targets are reminiscent of the targets for the Second Millennium Development Goal (MDG2), which sought to achieve universal primary education by 2015. Despite the progress made by the international community, the targets of MDG2 were ultimately not met, with almost 60 million children not attending school. To realize and meet the targets laid out in SDG4, new education strategies and plans will need to be developed and implemented at the national, regional, and international levels, and require logistical and financial support from civil society and international agencies. Many critical challenges, such as teacher shortages and the lack of educational infrastructure, remain roadblocks to implementation, especially in lesser developed States.

**Topic B: Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) was adopted in 1989 and seeks to guarantee the economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights for all people under the age of 18. In the over 25 years since its adoption, the quality of the lives of children worldwide have improved dramatically, but there are still major obstacles to the full realization of children’s human rights. Tens of millions of children lack access to education, children continue to suffer and die from preventable illnesses, and over 150 million children remain engaged in child labor. Many States have adopted policies aimed at protecting children, but they are often not enforced, either by choice or due to lack of resources. In addition to the main provisions of the UNCRC, its less-ratified, optional protocols seek to prevent the use of children in conflict, prostitution, and pornography. The third optional protocol, which provides an international complaints procedure for child rights violations, has amassed the signatures of only 32 parties. While much of the burden of implementation of the UNCRC and its optional protocols falls to Member States, multilateral bodies can offer high levels of support and garner political will to help promote and protect the rights of children.

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2 Ibid.


4 Ibid.


General Assembly Fourth Committee Topic Summaries

Topic A: Human Rights of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territory, including East Jerusalem

The occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) generally refers to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which are occupied or otherwise controlled by the State of Israel. Despite many international efforts to address the issues related to land- and occupation-based disputes, there is no clear path forward in achieving a negotiated solution. The General Assembly (GA) Fourth Committee does not discuss how to come to such a solution, but rather, discusses how to protect and promote the human rights of Palestinian Refugees and of Palestinians in the oPt. International reports have repeatedly affirmed that international human rights laws are applicable in the oPt and a recent report of the Secretary-General noted that Israel has ratified almost all applicable human rights agreements, including the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.* The realization of these rights is hampered in numerous ways, notably the denial of the right to development due to a blockade imposed on the territories since 2007. In both the oPt and Jerusalem, Palestinians are often not afforded access to basic services, including health care, education, and housing. While the Palestinian Authority has been successful in building up some public institutions, major challenges remain, particularly in the realization of economic and political rights.


The GA Fourth Committee is the principal body responsible for discussing peacekeeping at a high level and making recommendations with regards to peacekeeping logistics and long-term trends. Field support, which includes provision of supplies and logistics for peacekeepers, is often considered the critical factor in determining the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions. Peacekeeping missions employ resources from Member States, including military and police units, and the United Nations (UN) itself typically provides fuel, water, accommodations, and facilities, often in partnership with commercial contractors. In the 2010 *Global Field Support Strategy* (GFSS), which was in place through 2015, the Secretary-General identified many areas of opportunity for field support, including forming mandates based on support capabilities, improving the capacity of the UN to rapidly deliver materials and personnel, and more efficiently using resources. While the implementation of the GFSS has ended, its goal remains in place, and the UN has continued its efforts to streamline and better support peacekeeping operations, especially as resources have becoming increasingly strained.

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4 Ibid.

Economic and Social Council Topic Summaries

Topic A: Science and Technology for Food Security

The international community continuously faces global challenges in food security with many mutually reinforcing issues including hunger, poverty, and environmental degradation.¹ To combat these global challenges, science and technology must be incorporated as best practices and essential contributors to solving problems associated with the lack of food security. Sustainable Development Goal 2 strives to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.”² In order to achieve food security, specific focus needs to be given to enhancing crop yields and productivity; implementing safe and beneficial biotechnology; benefiting from information and communication technologies; managing natural resources and biodiversity; and addressing environmental and climate change concerns to minimize the adverse impacts of natural disasters.³ To assist with these needs, Member States should strive to place an increased focus on science and technology in arresting or potentially reversing the ongoing trends in environmental degradation and the erosion of basic land resources. Further, there is an ever increasing need to apply science to agriculture, fisheries, and forestry, as well as to rural, coastal, and urban ecosystems and human systems to combat hunger and poverty.⁴

Topic B: The Role of Sustainable Development in the Eradication of Poverty

The eradication of poverty in all its forms, including extreme poverty, is held as an indispensable requirement for the improvement of the health and security of our planet.⁵ Economic and Social Council Resolution E/CN.5/2016/L/4 decided that a priority and overarching theme for 2017-2018 would be “Strategies for Eradicating Poverty to Achieve Sustainable Development for All.” The crucial importance of the link between sustainable development and the eradication of poverty is enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal 1: to end poverty in all its forms, everywhere. To achieve this goal, emphasis is placed on providing adequate and predictable means to implement programs and policies that reflect sustainable development goals and the eradication of poverty in developing Member States.⁶ Further, sustainable development places an increased focus on achieving a green economy. Through the greening of economies, associated

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⁴ Ibid.
enterprises and jobs can potentially contribute to poverty eradication and further contribute to sustainable development.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Topic C: Economic Development of Countries Emerging from Conflict**

Member States emerging from conflict are often vulnerable and unstable. These Member States face a wide range of volatile risks which have the potential to spiral Member States back into conflict. To emerge successfully from a period of conflict, they must receive well-planned assistance to promote economic growth. In Resolution 2002/1, the Economic and Social Council created a framework for advisory groups on African Member States emerging from conflict to assess the humanitarian and economic needs of these Member States.\footnote{“Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African Countries emerging from conflict,” United Nations Economic and Social Council, accessed on March 20, 2017, \url{http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/adhocmech/conflict.shtml}.} Within the workings of these advisory groups, an emphasis was placed upon economic rehabilitation and reconstruction as important elements in the long-term development of post-conflict countries.\footnote{Jochen Prantl, et al, *ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African Countries Emerging from Conflict: The Silent Avant-Garde* (New York: United Nations, 2006), 9, available at: \url{http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/pdfs/final_ahag_book_of_ecosoc.pdf}.} To achieve long term development, after a Member States emerges from conflict, essential economic governance functions must be reestablished and the government’s legitimacy must be restored.\footnote{Ibid.} Once this is achieved, there must be an increased focus in determining and addressing the root economic causes of conflict and a push to stabilize the economy and position it to grow. Finally, there must be a concerted effort to establish these short-term goals and achievements to set up and reinforce long-term goals. By focusing on a partnership between national authorities from the Member State emerging from conflict and the international community, economic development can constitute a determinative force for Member States as they emerge from conflict.
International Labour Organization Topic Summaries

Topic A: Human Rights in Regards to Multinational Corporations and other Business Entities

The responsibility to protect human rights is an international standard of expected conduct for all multinational corporations and additional business entities regardless of where they operate. This expected conduct exists independently of Member States’ abilities to fulfill their own human rights obligations, but does not diminish those obligations. Further, this expected conduct exists above and beyond usual compliance with national and international laws and regulations protecting human rights. This expected conduct refers to internationally recognized human rights which are understood, at minimum, as those identified in the International Bill of Human rights and the principles concerning fundamental rights as set out in the International Labour Organization’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (the Declaration).¹

Within the Declaration, Member States are committed to respect and promote principles and rights in four distinctive categories, regardless of whether or not they have ratified the relevant conventions.² However, these fundamental rights are not always enforced or respected, which creates an increased need for annual reporting from Member States that have not yet ratified one or more of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions related to the Declaration. Further assistance is required in technical cooperation projects that address identifiable needs regarding the Declaration and the strengthening of local capacities to translate principles found in the Declaration to national practice.³

Topic B: International Labor Standards and Socially Inclusive Globalization

International Labour Standards (ILS) and their application have become increasingly present as globalization continues. Since 1919, the ILO has developed and maintained a system of ILS that aimed at the promotion of various opportunities for men and women to obtain decent and productive work where there is a reliance on conditions of freedom, equity, security, and dignity.⁴ As the international community continues towards a globalized economy, ILS become progressively more essential in the international framework in order to ensure that continuing growth of a global economy is beneficial for all.⁵ To this end, the international community has identified four primary areas of concern that must be addressed to move towards socially inclusive globalization while respecting and implementing ILS: (1) the national and regional implementation of ILS; (2) identifying how ILS benefit workers in formal and informal economies; (3) examine anti-crisis measures that have linked financial aid and assistance with

³ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
labor standards; and (4) potential impacts of ILS through bilateral and multilateral trade agreements.

**Topic C: Migrant Labor and the Flow of Remittances**

Per the World Bank’s Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016, more than 3.4 percent of the world population live outside their countries of birth. This poses a challenge to global community to manage migration so that it can serve as a force for growth and development.

With large migrant corridors throughout the international community, the flow of remittances continues to pose challenges for Member States. Migrants are sending back earnings, roughly equated to US$441 billion, to their families in developing countries. While this can lead to increased investments in health, education, etc., it can also lead to serious socioeconomic issues within Member States. The ILO works continuously with migrant workers and their remittance beneficiaries to increase their capacity to make rational and informed choices about how remittances are used, but issues with the flow of remittances persists. For example, for developing countries, remittances were the second-largest source of external funding behind foreign direct investment (FDI), and remittances are less volatile than FDI. In fact, in times of economic hardship, when FDI falls off, remittances tend to increase. However, in some Member States, it is estimated that only around fifty percent of remittances pass through official banking channels, which can have adverse effects on economic systems and markets. ILO Convention No. 97 requires Member States to transfer such remittances, but when these remittances are passed through unofficial channels, they cannot be monitored.

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10 International Labour Conference Report VI.

11 Ibid.

World Intellectual Property Organization Topic Summaries

Topic A: Cybersecurity and the Theft of Intellectual Property Online

Intellectual property (IP) lies at the heart of 21st century companies; it drives innovation, competition, and business and economic growth.1 It is the cornerstone of governmental and scientific advancements, and now, it all exists primarily online. Due to the rise of information and communication technologies, IP has become vulnerable to digital theft, leaving governments, businesses, and individuals at risk in an unprecedented manner. Cybercrime has become a business that exceeds trillions of dollars a year in lost IP, and affects millions of people worldwide.2 Through the implementation of the International Multilateral Partnership against Cyber Threats (IMPACT), Member States have adopted the largest cybersecurity alliance to “translate high level policies and recommendations into concrete initiatives”3 to safeguard IP on the Internet and combat cybercrime. However, IMPACT is only a small step towards comprehensive cybersecurity. Because cyberattacks can be committed remotely anywhere, more effective cooperation and assistance are needed to aid Member States in developing and implementing cybersecurity laws and regulations.4 In order to fully address cybersecurity concerns and develop effective prevention strategies, issues surrounding the underreporting of cybercrimes, the lack of uniform reporting and data collection standards on cyberattacks, and the poor communication between Member States regarding cybersecurity practices must be mitigated.

Topic B: Protection and Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Indigenous knowledge systems encompass sophisticated arrays of information, understandings, and interpretations that have guided centuries of human interaction with the natural environment.5 These systems have long been exploited and exempted from intellectual property laws, allowing others to profit off the cultural knowledge of indigenous peoples without providing the originators of the knowledge with any compensation. While there is not an internationally-accepted agreement on the protocol or mechanism for protecting indigenous knowledge systems, the World Intellectual Property Organization continues to make advancements on this issue through the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge, and Folklore (IGC). The IGC’s mandate calls

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4 Ibid.
for the establishment of an agreement on “an international legal instrument relating to intellectual property which will ensure the balanced and effective protection of genetic resources, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.” Currently, the IGC is developing draft articles for The Protection of Traditional Cultural Expressions, a document that seeks to establish a mechanism for safeguarding and protecting indigenous knowledge systems. However, Member States still must create and implement sui generis legislation that reflects their cultural and political conditions to protect and promote indigenous knowledge systems.

**Topic C: Healthcare and Pharmacological Patents**

Scientific and technological innovations have dramatically improved healthcare responses to health conditions and crises. However, these innovations raise concerns about the role of patents in healthcare and pharmaceutical innovation, particularly as it conflicts with access to health care and public health matters. Within the healthcare system, the patent system is designed to effectively promote innovation, protect innovations, and incentivize innovators to invest in research, as well as maintain the general public’s accessibility to new innovations. This creates challenges for policy makers to find balance between the rights of patent owners and the providing full access to necessary healthcare services to the public. One of the primary concerns is the ever-growing issue of pricing and access to pharmaceuticals. For example, the first manufacturer of a new drug patents it, and the intellectual property rights (IPRs) afforded to that manufacturer exclude competitors from manufacturing the drug. The patent holding company now controls the availability and pricing of the new medicine, and can create artificial shortages or price the drug so as to make it inaccessibly expensive for consumers, effectively denying access to necessary health products to some individuals. The IPRs provide important research and development incentives to discover, develop, and market new drugs and technologies, but have the potential to create difficult economic and policy issues, particularly in relation to public health concerns and neglected diseases.

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11 “Public Health and Patents.”
Security Council Topic Summaries

Topic A: Addressing Children in Armed Conflict

Children are amongst the most heavily impacted populations in armed conflict zones. For the past twenty years, the United Nations Security Council (SC) has continually monitored the plight of children in armed conflict as children are often harmed or exposed to numerous threats as a result of massive displacement.¹ According to the Human Rights Council, children in armed conflicts were reportedly sexually abused, maimed, killed, recruited for other harmful enterprises, and deprived of liberty.² The impact of conflict on young girls is especially worrisome throughout periods of sustained conflict; they are at higher risk for increased abuse due to the lack of assistance needed for protection. In an attempt to mitigate these threats to children’s lives and safety, a number of Member States signed action plans to end violations against children. These action plans are situationally specific frameworks that outline concrete, time-bound steps that lead to compliance with international law on the protection of children.³ However, even with such plans in place, violations against children are on the rise, particularly in places such as Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.⁴ The small progress made on protecting children in armed conflict zones pales in comparison to the significant challenges to preventing violations of children’s rights, particularly as they relate to explosive weapons and remnants of war; healthcare; and education for children trapped in conflict zones.⁵

Topic B: Protection of Natural Resources and Cultural Heritage from Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime

Cultural heritage items and natural resources are at risk of being smuggled and sold by terrorist organizations. These terrorist groups exploit cultural sites and natural resources, and utilize their links to transnational organized crime to finance their activities. The SC has condemned the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, religious sites and artefacts, and the smuggling of cultural property by terrorist groups during armed conflict, and argued that such attacks might

⁴ “Children’s Rights Violations during Armed Conflicts on Rise.”
⁵ Ibid.
constitute a war crime. 6 The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) continues its effort to preserve cultural heritage and the SC encourages Member States to provide funding for the support of preventative and emergency operations for cultural heritage in peril. The protection of cultural heritage is inexorably linked to security in the modern world as the deliberate destruction of heritage has become part of a strategy of cultural cleansing, aimed at destroying societies in the long-term. 7 Preventing the acquisition of cultural heritage items and natural resources by terrorists requires international cooperation and strategic implementation that is critical to the maintenance of international peace and security and the overall combating of terrorism and transnational organized crime.

**Topic C: Measures to Combat Terrorism and Militancy in Africa**

Since the 1990s, there have been many new challenges facing the international community in regards to combatting terrorism. The SC has stipulated a terrorist as anyone who “supports, facilitates, participates or attempts to participate in the financing, planning, preparation or commission of terrorist acts or provides safe havens.” 8 With an exponential increase in globalization, terrorist organizations have been able to adapt to new environments and adopt new methods of recruitment and action at a much faster pace than in years past. In Africa in particular, instances of terrorism have risen rapidly, causing terrorism and militancy to become one of the region’s largest security threats. 9 In response to new and existing threats, the international community has created entities and passed numerous legal documents including broad-reaching actions, as well as region- and State-specific actions. 10 The United Nations has created a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which is structured around four pillars: addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; preventing and combatting terrorism; building Member States’ capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the UN system; and ensuring the respect for human rights for all. 11 The African Union has passed a multitude of resolutions and declarations aimed to fight terrorism in the region, but face numerous challenges in the implementation of these strategies, largely due to their inexact definition of terrorism. 12

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7 “The First G7 on Culture,” G7 in US, accessed on April 1, 2017, [https://medium.com/g7inus/the-first-g7-on-culture-3b2f5589e20a](https://medium.com/g7inus/the-first-g7-on-culture-3b2f5589e20a).


