

General Assembly First Committee Topic Summaries

Topic A: The Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects

The illicit flows of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) undermines security and fuels conflict, which can lead to the displacement of civilians and massive human rights violations, including the loss of life.¹ The United Nations has pursued eliminating the illicit trade of SALW for decades and in 2001 unanimously adopted the *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects* (PoA).² The PoA is the primary framework to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit trade of SALW and outlines many commitments needed from Member States. In addition to the PoA, the international community has adopted the *International Tracing Instrument* (ITI), which outlines how Member States can ensure that weapons are properly marked and that records are kept.³ Most recently, the General Assembly adopted *A/RES/72/57* and encouraged Member States to implement the recommendations from the Group of Governmental Experts, including working to improve cooperation in preventing, combating, and eradicating illicit brokering in SALWs.⁴

Topic B: Role of Science and Technology in the Context of International Security and Disarmament

The role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament was first on the agenda of the General Assembly First Committee in 1988, when it adopted *A/RES/43/77(A)*.⁵ At that time, increasing amounts of resources were being utilized to develop new and emerging weapon systems, which lead to uncertainty and insecurity throughout the international community.⁶ As modern technologies, such as satellites, drones, the Internet, and data analytics, including the use of big data, are actively or potentially being weaponized, discussions are occurring throughout the international community as to the feasibility of developing international standards or instruments to ensure that such technologies are contributing to peace processes and not to conflict. Emerging technologies have often played a part in confidence building, information sharing, and disarmament, but balancing its use in development and identifying how to ensure peaceful uses remains difficult.⁷ At its most recent session, the General Assembly adopted *A/RES/72/28*, which called for the Secretary-General to submit a report on the subject to its next session and invited Member States to work to ensure that advancements in science and technology are being used for the purposes of disarmament, including verification, arms control and non-proliferation.⁸

¹ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/salw/>

² <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/salw/programme-of-action/>

³ <http://www.un-arm.org/PoAISS/InternationalTracingInstrument.aspx>

⁴ <https://undocs.org/A/RES/72/57>

⁵ <https://undocs.org/A/RES/43/77>

⁶ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/topics/scienceandtechnology/>

⁷ <http://repository.un.org/handle/11176/154089>

⁸ <http://undocs.org/a/res/72/28>

General Assembly Second Committee Topic Summaries

Topic A: Women in Development

The General Assembly (GA) adopted *A/RES/40/204* in 1985 and, for the first time, formally recognized the importance of mobilizing and integrating women in development.¹ The GA has regularly discussed the topic since, most recently considering the report of the Secretary-General *A/72/282* and adopting *A/RES/72/234*. The GA has repeatedly affirmed that women must play a vital role and be afforded full and equal participation in economies in order to achieve sustainable development and maximize economic growth and productivity; however, the GA has also noted that many gaps persist in achieving such a reality.² Not only do women often face limitations with regards to their economic activity, but they are also more likely work in the informal economy and be victims of unfair labor practices. International efforts on women in development have focused on ensuring women have access to decent work, equal pay, social protections, and a more equitable share of, or recognition for, unpaid care and domestic work. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 stresses the importance of providing women with equal access to education, healthcare, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes.³ While commitments have been made by Member States, the international community continues to push for full implementation of the *Beijing Platform for Action* and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, which will further women's role in development and accelerate the growth of the global economy.

Topic B: Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity

The *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD), also known as the *Biodiversity Convention*, entered into force on December 29, 1993.⁴ The CBD is an international environmental agreement established to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of biological resources.⁵ A primary aim of the CBD is to protect and promote biological diversity as a resource and as part of the entire ecological system.⁶ Two supplementary protocols have also been adopted, the *Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety*, which seeks to ensure safe handling and use of living modified organisms, and the *Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization*, which establishes a legal framework for accessing and sharing genetic resources. Implementing the CBD continues to be difficult for many Member States. In 2002, the Conference of Parties to the CBD set the 2010 Biodiversity Target, which was largely not met throughout the international community, and Member States are falling short of the 2020 deadline for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which were established in 2010.⁷ Implementation of the CBD requires Member States to take national ownership over implementation activities with assistance from the regional and international levels.⁸ This assistance includes capacity building for effective national action, financial contributions and resources, enhanced cooperation through partnerships and other initiatives, and support mechanisms that enable research, monitoring, and assessment.⁹

¹ <http://undocs.org/a/res/40/204>

² <http://undocs.org/a/res/72/234>

³ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

⁴ <https://www.cbd.int/history/>

⁵ <http://www.sai.uni-heidelberg.de/sapol/pdf/Implementation.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/MDB/documents/impecbd.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320717309631>

⁸ <https://www.cbd.int/sp/elements/default.shtml>

⁹ <https://www.cbd.int/sp/elements/default.shtml>

General Assembly Third Committee Topic Summaries

Topic A: Promoting the Inclusion of Women and Youth in Governance

The presence of women and youth in governance can be a driving force for achieving peace, development, human rights, and justice.¹ Throughout history, the contributions women and youth have allowed for important changes in political systems, power-sharing dynamics, and economic opportunities.² Women and youth have developed legislation that promote gender equality, eliminate gender-based violence, and improve the social, economic, and political rights of women and children. However, women and youth are still restricted in political participation and are often face barriers as they attempt to promote their ideologies.³ As of 2017, only 16 heads of State and 9 heads of government were women.⁴ The involvement of female parliamentarians is only 10% higher than it was in 2000, but only 18.3% of national government ministries were women as of January 2017.⁵ Youth, while often among the most active and vocal promoters of their ideologies, are often ignored or barred from participating in political processes. The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* and the *World Programme of Action for Youth* are essential frameworks for the international community. Due to the low and slow involvement of women and youth in governance, the international community has affirmed the need to strengthen political commitments through resolutions, including *A/RES/66/130*, and acting bodies and agencies, including the Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace.⁶

Topic B: The Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Historically, persons with disabilities are among the most marginalized in society. To combat this, the United Nations adopted the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) and its optional protocol in 2007, which signaled the culmination of years of work by the United Nations to change attitudes and approaches to individuals with disabilities.⁷ Building on this work, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* explicitly addresses disabilities and persons with disabilities as a component of the Sustainable Development Goals.⁸ However, full implementation of the CPRD has not yet been realized and persons with disabilities are widely susceptible to discrimination, marginalization, poverty, and lack of access to social, political, and economic goods. When persons with disabilities are part of marginalized groups they especially face difficult challenges in their everyday lives, including lack of access to healthcare, increased violence, exploitation, and abuse. To combat this, the General Assembly made recommendations in *A/RES/72/162*, including inviting the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities to host an annual dialogue with the General Assembly.⁹ Action to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities is still lacking across the international community and issues such as access to social protection, political participation, and economic independence of persons with disabilities continues to be topics of international concern.

¹ <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf>

² <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf>

³ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation>

⁴ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

⁵ <http://undocs.org/E/2017/66>

⁶ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democratic-governance-and-peacebuilding/youth-empowerment/youth-global-programme-for-sustainable-development-and-peace/>

⁷ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

⁸ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/envision2030.html>

⁹ <http://undocs.org/A/RES/72/162>

General Assembly Fourth Committee Topic Summaries

Topic A: International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

In 1959, the United Nations General Assembly created the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), which reports to the General Assembly Fourth Committee (GA4) and oversees the exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of humanity.¹ GA4 and COPUOS have both aimed to promote the peaceful uses of outer space through international legal instruments, research and development, and capacity building.² Five international treaties and five sets of international principles on space-related activities have been developed, including the *Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space and Other Celestial Bodies*, also known as the *Outer Space Treaty*.³ The *Outer Space Treaty* recognized outer space as the “common heritage of mankind,” meaning that it should be held in trust for future generations and protected from exploitation by individual Member States. As commercial space activities, including mining, tourism, and even habitation of outer space or celestial bodies is becoming increasingly possible, the international community has also increasingly discussed how to address outer space issues, including ownership, space junk, telecommunications, and related topics. The General Assembly First Committee continues to work to prevent a possible arms race in outer space and GA4 continues to promote and strengthen international cooperation in its peaceful uses.⁴ In its most recent resolution, *A/RES/72/77*, the General Assembly highlighted the importance of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and the need for more cooperation and information sharing to address emerging issues and challenges.

Topic B: Assistance in Mine Action

Each year, landmines and other explosive hazards injure or kill thousands globally.⁵ These explosive remnants of war can hinder the delivery of humanitarian assistance, prevent children from going to school, stop farmers working the land, and rob people of their livelihoods. The international community has attempted to combat the use of landmines and other indiscriminate weapons via several instruments, including the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction* and the *Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons*, specifically its second protocol that covers mines, booby traps, and other devices. In order to assist Member States, the United Nations established its Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to lead, coordinate, and implement all aspects linked to the mitigation of threats from mines and explosive remnants of war.⁶ UNMAS coordinates all UN Mine Action and works with 11 other United Nations bodies to ensure an effective, proactive, and coordinating response to mines and explosive remnants of war. To this end, UNMAS has identified five pillars of mine action: clearance, education, victim assistance, advocacy, and stockpile destruction, which form the core of the international community’s response to the issue of mines.⁷ The General Assembly regularly adopts resolutions on mine action, most recently *A/RES/72/75*, and to examine how to best improve the situation worldwide.

¹ <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/copuos/index.html>

² <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/topics/capacity-building.html>

³ <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties.html>

⁴ <http://undocs.org/en/A/C.4/72/L.2>

⁵ <http://www.mineaction.org/unmas/about>

⁶ <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/un-mine-action-service-unmas>

⁷ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/mine-action-for-sustainable-development.html>



Economic and Social Council Topic Summaries

Topic A: South-South Cooperation

South-South cooperation (SSC) is the collaboration among countries of the global South in political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and technical domains and can happen at the bilateral, regional, or international level.¹ SSC has continually increased as a phenomenon because not only have States in the Global South garnered more access to resources and pushed back against reliance on industrialized partners, but also because it has become an important avenue for hastening development through information and technology sharing. The first acknowledgment of SSC came in the 1978 *Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries*, which marked a shift from the standard model of only developed States providing development assistance to a more modern paradigm where cooperation can be North-South, South-South, or triangular.² The General Assembly endorsed the *Buenos Aires Plan of Action* with *A/RES/33/134*, which requested United Nations programs, regional bodies, and other relevant actors to take action in facilitating its implementation.³ The United Nations has several entities that support SSC. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, for example, acts as a knowledge hub with advisory and consulting services for those with a stake in South-South cooperation. SSC is also the second focus area of ECOSOC's Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), which will ensure that the topic remains on ECOSOC's agenda for the foreseeable future.⁴

Topic B: The Use of Restorative Justice Systems

Prevention of crime and damage to communities are objectives of any justice system, but the international community has struggled to find ways in which to discourage crime and prevent individuals from repeatedly committing criminal offenses. Restorative justice systems aim to rehabilitate offenders through reconciliation with victims and their communities.⁵ Restorative justice systems can take many forms but often involve a judicial or other authority to facilitating the meeting of the offender with the victim and allowing for compensation of damages through some form of community service.⁶ Through restorative justice, offenders are often rehabilitated and potentially gain useful skills and give back to their community as opposed to only being imprisoned or otherwise punished, which has no external benefit for the community or the victim and may not help the offender to move away from criminal activities. In 2000, ECOSOC adopted *E/RES/2000/14* establishing basic principles on the use of restorative justice programs, and in 2006 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) created a handbook to give assistance to Member States in the implementation of such systems. The handbook also acknowledges the potential pitfalls of restorative justice systems: for victims, it can cause trauma during meetings with the offender; offenders could potentially see the restorative process as an easy way out; and for the criminal justice system itself it can introduce a much higher level of burden.⁷ The international community continues to discuss how to best use restorative justice and minimize its potentially negative aspects.

¹ <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/about/about-sstc/>

² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-buqyoV0jpSMm1OVEZYU2hNTWc/view>

³ <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/33/ares33r134.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/development-cooperation-forum>

⁵ https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime_Resolutions/1990-1999/1999/ECOSOC/Resolution_1999-26.pdf

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Topic B: Sustainable Alternative Development

Alternative development refers to promoting economic development and enabling rural farmers who might otherwise grow illicit crops to have economic alternatives, thereby addressing one of the root causes of illicit drug production, namely poverty and the lack of development.⁸ Effective alternative development can improve livelihoods and well-being of people, address poverty, and improve human security.⁹ Alternative development is one of the pillars of the comprehensive drug control strategy used by the UNODC. Along with other United Nations bodies and programs, the UNODC assists small farmers with licit income generation activities to reduce their dependency on income from opium and coca cultivation and supports health, education, basic infrastructure, community development, and food security with special attention to environmental safety.¹⁰ Although there is clear need for sustainable alternative development in many communities that are financially reliant on illicit crop cultivation, Member States and the international community have struggled to support alternative development efforts and to broadly encouraging switching to other crops. Farmers are often hesitant to cultivate a crop that they are unfamiliar with, especially if they have no guarantee that it will ensure the continued well-being of their family. That said, efforts to advance alternative development have been considerable in recent years, although there are still opportunities to improve financial, political, and social support.¹¹

⁸ https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2015/Alternative_Development_Working_Paper_2015.pdf

⁹ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2016/April/alternative-development-and-its-role-in-implementing-the-sustainable-development-goals.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/alternative-development/success-stories.html>

¹¹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2015/Alternative_Development_Working_Paper_2015.pdf

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Topic Summaries

Topic A: Return and Restitution of Cultural Property

Cultural property refers to artifacts that are considered culturally significant and worthy of preservation for the future. In the 1960s, incidences of theft of such property, particularly in countries of the global South, led to the adoption of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*, which sought to prevent illicit transfers of cultural property and established mechanisms for property restitution.¹ The convention was not all-encompassing, however, and UNESCO asked UNIDROIT, formerly known as the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, to develop the *Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects*, which it did in 1995.² Organizations, including UNESCO, The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the World Customs Organization, are still fighting to prevent the illicit transfer of cultural property as its restitutions remains a very complicated affair and adoption and implementation of the conventions remain sparse, in spite of operational guidelines being made available.³ UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property assists Member States in when the conventions can't be applied, but there have only been a handful of successful cases.⁴ Theft, illicit sales and transfers, and destruction of cultural property all remain pressing issues and the international community lacks robust legal and operational mechanisms to their ensure safe and proper return.

Topic B: Traditional Knowledge Systems

Indigenous peoples and societies with long histories have often developed skills, philosophies, and know-how that has been passed from generation to generation and often forms part of the community's cultural or spiritual identity. Commonly known as traditional knowledge, these intergenerational systems can be used to address many modern issues, including in agriculture, science, technology, ecology, and medicine.⁵ While there are no universally accepted definitions of indigenous peoples or traditional knowledge, there has been progressive international action to promote and protect traditional knowledge. *Agenda 21*, which was adopted at the 1992 Rio Conference, identified traditional knowledge as having a vital role "in environmental management and development."⁶ The 2007 *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* went much further and established that "indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their traditional knowledge."⁷ In spite of such documents, traditional knowledge is often lost and, more commonly, exploited for profit without consultation with indigenous communities. In the current context, there have also been international discussions on how to better protect and leverage traditional knowledge to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems program assists in these efforts, and the World Intellectual Property Organization has been crucial in helping communities to establish patent, trademark, and geographical indication protection for traditional knowledge.⁸

¹ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property/1970-convention/>

² <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property/1995-unidroit-convention/>

³ <http://undocs.org/a/res/70/76>

⁴ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/restitution-of-cultural-property/return-or-restitution-cases/>

⁵ <http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/tk/>

⁶ http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/ILK_ex_publication_E.pdf

⁷ Ibid

⁸ <http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/tk/>

Topic C: Bioethics and the Human Genome

Genetic research has the potential to improve healthcare and quality of life, but there is also potential for genetic technology to cause harm or restrict human rights. The concept of bioethics and the extent to which it is responsible to modify the human genome has become an increased topic of international discussion since it was discovered that CRISPR-Cas9 may be used to edit the human genome in 2015.⁹ CRISPR-Cas9 is a technology that may allow geneticists to edit the genome by adding to, removing from, or altering it.¹⁰ UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee has discussed potential concerns with genome editing; they released a report in 2015 which warned that "this development seems to require particular precautions and raises serious concerns, especially if the editing of the human genome should be applied to the germline and therefore introduce hereditary modifications, which could be transmitted to future generations."¹¹ In addition to potential problems for future generations, the Committee highlighted moral and ethical concerns related to hypothetical "designer babies" or the fostering of effective eugenics.¹² UNESCO adopted the *Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights* and the *International Declaration on Human Genetic Data* to address emerging human rights concerns related to analyzing and editing the human genome, but these two instruments are limited and concerns remain.¹³

⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4417674/>

¹⁰ <https://www.yourgenome.org/facts/what-is-crispr-cas9>

¹¹ <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-panel-experts-calls-ban-editing-human-dna-avoid-unethical-tampering-hereditary-traits>

¹² <https://news.un.org/en/story/2015/10/511732-un-panel-warns-against-designer-babies-and-eugenics-editing-human-dna>

¹³ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/bioethics/human-genetic-data/>

World Health Organization Topic Summaries

Topic A: Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as diseases of long duration and generally slow progression with four main types: cardiovascular, cancer, chronic respiratory, and diabetes.¹ NCDs attribute to 70 percent of all deaths worldwide and, of those deaths, 82 percent occur in low- and middle-income countries. WHO has found an increase in NCD related deaths from tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol, and unhealthy diets.² Prevention, management, and surveillance are the principle factors that WHO has identified to help curb the number of deaths from NCDs. WHO has many programs and departments focused on prevention, including the Tobacco Free Initiative, the Chronic Diseases and Health Promotion Department, and mHealth, each of which have different targets and objectives to help lessen the number NCDs.³ WHO works to provide screenings and treatment, which are the most costly aspects of combating NCDs.⁴ Surveillance of NCDs has shown that childhood obesity has risen exponentially over the past four decades as unhealthy diets in low to moderate income countries increase.⁵ WHO continues to combat the effects of NCDs in line with the *Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2013-2020* and relevant resolutions, including *A/RES/66/2*.⁶

Topic B: Sexually Transmitted Infections

Sustainable Development Goal 3 is dedicated to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages, including by combatting the spread and effects of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).⁷ WHO's *Global Health Sector Strategy on Sexually Transmitted Infections, 2016-2021* lays out a vision of zero new infections, zero STI-related complications and deaths, and a world where everyone has free and easy access to sexually transmitted infection prevention and treatment services; however, achieving such a vision would require massive global action.⁸ Chlamydia, syphilis, and trichomoniasis are among the most prevalent global STIs, but gonorrhoeae, *Treponema pallidum*, and human papillomavirus are currently being prioritized for control and monitoring due to their relatively cost-effect interventions.⁹ HIV/AIDS also continues to be a global issue; many United Nations bodies work to combat HIV/AIDS under the auspices of UNAIDS, a joint program of eleven bodies that work together to coordinate action and provide support services to combat and treat HIV.¹⁰ UNAIDS offers programming to help with both treatment and medical care, as well as educational and prevention materials. Some Member States have prioritized education regarding sexual and reproductive health care but changing behaviors through intervention has proven to be difficult, especially as curbing the spread of STIs often means pushing back against sociocultural norms.¹¹

¹ http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/noncommunicable_diseases/en/

² <http://www.who.int/ncds/en/>

³ <http://www.who.int/ncds/prevention/introduction/en/>

⁴ <http://www.who.int/ncds/management/en/>

⁵ <http://www.who.int/ncds/surveillance/en/>

⁶ http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA66/A66_R10-en.pdf?ua=1

⁷ <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/246296/WHO-RHR-16.09-eng.pdf;jsessionid=CD0AB2ACAA1A1D53DE85182735C36314?sequence=1>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <http://www.unaids.org/en/whoweare/about>

¹¹ <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/246296/WHO-RHR-16.09-eng.pdf;jsessionid=CD0AB2ACAA1A1D53DE85182735C36314?sequence=1>

Topic B: International Preparedness for Pandemics

Preparedness for potential pandemics at the national, regional, and international levels has become a topic of increasing concern as the threats posed by contagious diseases have increased. WHO has identified several pandemic or epidemic diseases, including Ebola virus disease, influenza, meningitis, sudden acute respiratory syndrome, and smallpox, among others. The effects of outbreaks can be reduced by being well prepared and having comprehensive, flexible, and responsive plans that are well-tested and engage actors at all levels of society.¹² WHO has created checklists for pandemic risk and impact management to assist national authorities in developing or updating their own preparedness plans.¹³ There are also United Nations entities that exist specifically to assist with preparing for and responding to pandemics, such as the United Nations System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC) Office and WHO's Contingency Fund for Emergencies.¹⁴ Response during pandemic events relies highly upon coordination; WHO has developed guidelines to provide consistent coordinated medical response internationally, but most responses rely on Member States continuing to provide essential services, including health, defense, law and order, finance, transport, telecommunications, energy, food and water services.¹⁵ In 2010, the World Health Assembly adopted *WHA63.1* to address pandemic influenza preparedness specifically, and WHO has since published several reports and findings, but several challenges remain in ensuring international preparedness for pandemics and outbreaks.¹⁶

¹² <http://www.who.int/influenza/preparedness/en/>

¹³ http://www.who.int/influenza/preparedness/pandemic/influenza_risk_management_checklist_2018/en/

¹⁴ <http://www.un-influenza.org/?q=content/pandemic-preparedness-guidelines>

¹⁵ <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259893/WHO-WHE-IHM-GIP-2017.1-eng.pdf;jsessionid=94FA7D0F5FB95E2C0F80C13CE1CED33E?sequence=1>

¹⁶ http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA63-REC1/WHA63_REC1-P2-en.pdf

Security Council Topic Summaries

Topic A: Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

The 2000 *Report on the Panel of Peace Operations*, commonly known as the *Brahimi Report*, describes peacebuilding as a variety of measures meant to prevent countries from entering new conflict or reigniting existing conflicts by engaging in activities to establish a foundation for peace.¹ This type of conflict prevention requires continuous engagement as well as different kinds of involvement depending on the State and nature of conflict.² In 2016, both the General Assembly and the Security Council passed resolutions calling for a more comprehensive approach to address conflict, including *A/RES/70/262* and *S/RES/2282*, both of which emphasize the need to prevent conflict from happening rather than only respond after a conflict has begun.³ In 2017, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called on the Security Council to focus its efforts on the prevention of conflict and creation of trust between governments and people and among Member States.⁴ Since the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the Security Council has recognized its importance in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG16, the goal dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. Outside the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund actively support peace efforts around the globe.⁵ International discussions on how to improve peacebuilding efforts are ongoing and regularly occur under the auspices of the Security Council.

Topic B: Enhancing the Effectiveness of UN Sanctions

Sanctions have long been used by the United Nations to address a variety of issues, including to deter illegal regime changes, to protect human rights, and to promote non-proliferation. The *Charter of the United Nations* grants authority to the Security Council to impose sanctions under Chapter VII, specifically Article 41. There are currently thirteen sanction regimes imposed on different entities.⁶ In 2015, pursuant to a Security Council resolution, there was a high-level review of the effectiveness of sanctions. The report gave 150 recommendations, many of which were for the Security Council, including recommendations to extend sanctions regimes and increase the resources made available for enforcement.⁷ On August 3, 2017 the Security Council held a briefing on the effectiveness of sanctions, at which Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun stated that sanctions are one part of a broader strategy to promote peace and prevent conflict and that one way to enhance the effectiveness of UN sanctions is to better involve Member States.⁸ He also called for support from across United Nations bodies to improve the effectiveness of sanctions.⁹ Discussions regarding how to improve the effectiveness of sanctions are ongoing, as are analyses of how to improve the effectiveness of other United Nations efforts, including mediation.¹⁰

¹ <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/193085/PolBrief78.pdf>

² http://www.academia.edu/31016531/UN_manual_for_conflict_prevention.pdf

³ <https://www.un.org/pga/72/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2017/11/Concept-note.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12673.doc.htm>

⁵ http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2282.pdf

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ http://www.onpcsb.ro/pdf/HLR_Compendium_2015.pdf

⁸ <http://www.un.org/undpa/en/speeches-statements/03082017/sanctions>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <https://unu.edu/sanctions-and-mediation>

Topic C: The Situation in Ukraine

The current situation in Ukraine began in 2014 when Russia entered Crimean territory, shortly before the people of Crimea voted for independence and asked to be a part of Russia in March that same year.¹¹ In response, the General Assembly adopted *A/RES/68/262* in April 2014, which addresses the issues in Crimea and expressed the international community's commitment to the territorial integrity of Ukraine.¹² The situation in Ukraine has not been resolved in the time since and major concerns remain for both the government of Ukraine and the international community.¹³ There have been numerous cease-fire violations as well as thousands of deaths, including civilians.¹⁴ The situation in Ukraine is not exclusively related to violence, as there are human rights and socio-economic issues as well; many people have been displaced by the fighting or are unable to lead normal productive lives.¹⁵ In 2017, the government of Ukraine and the United Nations created a five-year partnership which focuses on democratic governance and human security, especially in eastern Ukraine.¹⁶ On March 15, 2018, the Security Council had an Arria-Formula meeting regarding Crimea. At this meeting, Member States discussed how the Security Council can better respond to this situation including what measures can be taken.¹⁷ The Security Council also issued a press release in January 2017 expressing their concern about violence in eastern Ukraine.¹⁸

¹¹ <https://www.rt.com/news/crimea-referendum-results-official-250/>

¹² http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/262

¹³ <https://ukraineun.org/en/ukraine-and-unscc/our-priorities/>

¹⁴ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/06/559322-conflict-ukraine-enters-fourth-year-no-end-sight-un-report>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/government-ukraine-united-nations-partnership-framework-2018-2022-enuk>

¹⁷ <http://www.whatsinblue.org/2018/03/crimea-arria-formula-meeting.php>

¹⁸ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12700.doc.htm>