

FMUN 2022

General Assembly

Written by Angela Seminara and Eden Chaffee

Topic I : Addressing Unprecedented Hunger and Food Supply Chain Issues

Topic II : Combatting the Impacts of War on the Environment

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 17th annual Florida Model United Nations Conference! It is a great honor to serve as Director of the General Assembly, and I am so excited to see all of your preparation pay off as you gain experience over the course of the conference. I am Angela Seminara, and I am currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in English with the hope of eventually entering a Ph.D. program for Literary Criticism and Theory. I look forward to seeing how delegates work together to address these topics presented!

Hello everyone, my name is Eden Chaffee, and I am so excited to be able to serve as the Assistant Director of the General Assembly. I'm currently a double major in Psychology and Political Science, and am looking to eventually become a lawyer specializing in International Policy. These topics at hand are incredibly interesting, and I am excited for you all to get the opportunity to hone your skills as delegates.

The topics of this committee are as follows:

Topic I : Addressing Unprecedented Hunger and Food Supply Chain Issues

Topic II : Combatting the Impacts of War on the Environment

Delegates must understand that Model United Nations does not end at the completion of the committee, but continues to develop important life skills in public speaking, complex problem solving, critical thinking, technical writing, and negotiation. We encourage delegates to use this background guide as a resource and introduction to the topics; however, it is not meant to replace your individual research.

We hope all of you have fun at FMUN, make new connections, and learn new skills.

Sincerely,

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And

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Committee History

Established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly functions as the main policymaking and representative organ which works to resolve a wide range of issues that impact the international status quo. As it stands, there are 193 Member States represented in the body, with each state having one vote of equal weight and two permanent non-voting Members. Aside from admitting new Members into their ranks, membership into the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, and budgetary questions which require a two-thirds majority to pass, all resolutions in the General Assembly only require a simple majority vote to pass. All resolutions passed by the body are not legally binding and act as a symbolic agreement of the world, signifying their support or denouncement of a particular international issue. There is an active effort in the General Assembly to achieve a consensus on issues that strengthens the symbolic weight of the body's decisions but also requires a great deal of statecraft and diplomacy among all Member States to pass a resolution that all parties can agree is satisfactory within their national agendas while also addressing the situation the resolution is responding to. It is also the mandate of the General Assembly to consider reports from the Security Council and other United Nations Organs, protect the common environment, safeguard human rights, promote the rule of law, and reach goals to attain peace and security, among others.

Topic I : Addressing Unprecedented Hunger and Food Supply Chain Issues

Introduction

According to the United Nations Department of Operational Support, a supply chain is defined as "a system of organizations, people, activities, information, and resources involved in moving a good or service from the initial supplier to the final customer."¹ Global Food Supply Chains are integral to progress and development because they help make up for domestic shortcomings in crop production and give nations the opportunity to gain access to larger markets. Because of how interconnected the world's food sources are, the COVID-19 pandemic was incredibly detrimental, and the situation was made even worse when the Russia-Ukraine Conflict began in February of 2022.² The General Assembly Aims to provide a framework for member states on how to most efficiently respond to the food insecurity they may be experiencing due to these problems.

¹ "Supply Chain | Department of Operational Support." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed October 2, 2022. <https://operationalsupport.un.org/en/supply-chain>.

² "The War in Ukraine Is Fuelling a Global Food Crisis." Reuters. Thomson Reuters. Accessed October 2, 2022. <https://graphics.reuters.com/UKRAINE-CRISIS/FOOD/zjvqkgomjvx/>.

History

Though unprecedented, food crises are not new. For example, the Food Price Crisis of 2007-2008 took a dramatic toll on the international community. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), “ from January 2004 to May 2008, rice prices increased 224 percent, wheat prices increased 108 percent, and corn was up 89 percent.³ This increase was a major factor in food insecurity across the globe, civil unrest in multiple countries, and caused 36 nations to request food aid. There has been extensive discussion amongst experts on what caused this increase, especially the increase in the price of rice in 2008, and the general consensus is that this happened because of unpropitious policy responses which included export bans from exporters that are pillars in the global trade community. In the long run, targeted safety nets were proven to be the best response to price volatility⁴. “Other effective responses were “Reducing Import Restrictions, Releasing Stocks and Reassuring the Markets, Long Term Attention to the Agricultural Sector, and Emergency Donor Assistance”.⁵

Current Situation

The Covid-19 pandemic has drastically affected every area of food supply chains, concurrently impacting farm production, food processing, transport and logistics, and final demand. In terms of farm production, the industry has faced challenges with the system not having fast enough input production. The most affected input has been labor, but seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, and energy are also being impacted by bottlenecks⁶. Food processing industries have also been disrupted by the pandemic because of new social distancing rules, labor shortages as a result of illness, lockdowns, and other efforts to reduce the speed of which the virus spreads⁷. The bottleneck in transport and logistics that is causing products to slow down in this segment of the supply chain are due mainly to the dramatic decrease in passenger air travel. A majority of air cargo capacity is from passenger airplanes, so with travel being restricted, the amount of product able to be mobilized has steeply declined⁸. Final demand for products has also been impacted because COVID-19 has taken consumer demand away from restaurants and food commonly prepared by them and shifted it to be more focused on foods that are consumed at home⁹.

³ “Food Prices Crisis of 2007-2008: Lessons Learned - World.” ReliefWeb, March 3, 2011. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/food-prices-crisis-2007-2008-lessons-learned>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ 5. “Food Supply Chains and Covid-19: Impacts and Policy Lessons.” OECD. Accessed October 4, 2022.

<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/food-supply-chains-and-covid-19-impacts-and-policy-lessons-71b57aea/#section-d1e485>.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

The War in Ukraine has exacerbated already existing issues and also contributed new ones. Historically, Russia and Ukraine have been grain exporting powerhouses, and the war has disrupted global agricultural exports from both of them. Any disruption from these two countries is significant because according to data from the UN Comtrade, from 2016 to 2020 they accounted for 24% of global wheat exports by trade value, 57% of sunflower seed oil exports and 14% of corn¹⁰. The main reasons Ukraine is having problems are the damaged rail infrastructure, closed ports, and Russian blockades in the Black Sea are keeping them from exporting their current grain stock¹¹. Because of this decrease in supply, the demand has risen and therefore the price has risen dramatically. Multiple countries have recognized this and in order to stabilize prices and protect local markets, some key producing countries are limiting exports.¹² While this solution might work in the short term for these governments, on the international scale it puts citizens living in poverty and in countries that are dependent on food imports most at risk of suffering from the food inflation crisis.¹³

Conclusion and Committee Directive

Global Food Supply Chains have been significantly hampered and disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic along with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, creating complex economic and food source complications for many nations around the world. During this session, the General Assembly aims to provide a framework for member states on how to most efficiently respond to the complications of a broken global supply chain and the food insecurity that has only been worsened by these problems.

Topic II : Combatting the Impacts of War on the Environment

Introduction

On the 6th of November, the world observes International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict, a day created to raise awareness about the impact that armed conflicts have on the environment even long after the battle ends.¹⁴ The scars and impacts of war on the natural environment can stretch far beyond the battlefield and cause harm to natural resources that sustain the opportunity for peace. On this day, Antonio Guterres, the Secretary General of the UN, reaffirmed the importance of handling the issues surrounding the

¹⁰“The War in Ukraine Is Fueling a Global Food Crisis.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters. Accessed October 4, 2022. <https://graphics.reuters.com/UKRAINE-CRISIS/FOOD/zjvqkgomjvx/>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict,” United Nations (United Nations), accessed October 17, 2022, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/environment-in-war-protection-day>.

intersection of the environment and conflict by saying, “... we need to act boldly and urgently, to reduce the risks that environmental degradation and climate change present for conflict and commit to protecting our planet from the debilitating effects of war.”¹⁵ The goal of this meeting of the General Assembly is to provide an outline that member states can refer to on how to handle the environmental impacts of war most adequately.

History

The relationship between war and its effects on the environment is not a recent phenomenon. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) has found that over the last 60 years, “at least 40 percent of all internal conflicts have been linked to the exploitation of natural resources...”¹⁶ One of the places that have been most affected by this is Syria. Hasakah in Northeast Syria historically has provided over one-third of the entirety of Syria’s wheat supply, however, after the civil conflict, the fertile soil in the region is compromised¹⁷. The residents of the area whose livelihood used to depend on the mass exportation of wheat are now struggling to provide enough food to support even their own families. This situation is indicative of a common trend that countries face after enduring conflict, which is that the environmental consequences of war are directly correlated with the health of the affected region long after the conflict is resolved. The UNEP has echoed this sentiment by stating that “Conflicts involving natural resources have been found twice as likely to relapse.”¹⁸

Current Situation

The situation between Russia and Ukraine has had disastrous consequences for the surrounding environment. Over three million acres have been reported to have been bombed, burned, or polluted by various military maneuvers, according to the local Ministry of the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources¹⁹. Fertile soil has been bombed, burned, or polluted with various chemicals, rendering them useless. Around one-third of the country’s farmland resides in areas of Russian occupation, adding another layer to the challenges faced by the Ukrainian people. They face the impossible choice of dealing with land that is potentially poisoned or taking their chances in active conflict zones to eat. Within the first two months of the invasion, over 37,000 fires have been reported, spanning over a quarter of a million acres of forest. This has demolished the intricate ecosystems surrounding the conflict, and the Ukraine Nature Conservation Group (UNCG) has listed over 20 species that they believe will be extinct due to

¹⁵ “The Natural Environment Is Also a Casualty of War, Guterres Warns | | 1UN News,” United Nations (United Nations), accessed October 17, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1077032>.

¹⁶ “International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict,” United Nations (United Nations), accessed October 17, 2022, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/environment-in-war-protection-day>.

¹⁷ Joseph Hincks, “Syria’s 10-Year War Has Left a Toxic Environmental Legacy,” Time (Time, March 15, 2021), <https://time.com/5946800/syrian-war-environmental-impact/>.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Fred Pearce, Andrew S Lewis, and Jim Robbins, “Collateral Damage: The Environmental Cost of the Ukraine War,” Yale E360, accessed October 17, 2022, <https://e360.yale.edu/features/ukraine-russia-war-environmental-impact>.

the effects of the war²⁰. The steppes of Ukraine have long been hailed as a center of biodiversity, boasting unique plants and animals that are no longer found anywhere else. Comprehensive protections are put in place and recognized globally solely to protect the inhabitants of these grasslands and this loss of multifarious life should be considered.

Conclusion and Committee Directive

It is apparent there cannot be any lasting peace if the natural resources that our lives are built upon are mistreated and abused. During this upcoming session, the General Assembly intends to build a framework for Member States to refer to on how to sufficiently handle the issue of the consequences war has on surrounding environments. In this session, delegates should prioritize comprehensive and collaborative solutions for this urgent matter.

²⁰ Ibid.