

Background Guide for the General Assembly

Dear Delegates,

We are pleased to welcome you to the 2021 Florida Model United Nations Conference in Gainesville, FL. The Committee Chair for the General Assembly is Director Jermaine J Evans. Jermaine has a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies from the University of South Florida and is currently a Lieutenant in the United States Army.

A Brief History of the General Assembly

The General Assembly was one of the main foundations of the UN, rising out of the ashes of World War II.¹ In its 76-year history, it has been an organization that has been a supporter of disarmament, promotion of peaceful measures around the globe, and initiating solutions against the challenges of the international community. The UNGA's composition, powers, functions, and procedures stem from Chapter IV of the UN Charter.² It appoints the Secretary-General, sets the UN's budget, appoints non-permanent members to the Security Council, and collects and disseminates reports to other bodies of the UN, and making recommendations through resolutions.³ The UNGA membership started at 51 nations in 1945 before blossoming to 193, including 2 observer states. Two-thirds being developing states.⁴ The GA's importance cannot be overstated; it gives a forum for many less-developed nations to promote their foreign relations agendas and exert their diplomatic influence by giving each individual nation one vote.⁵ That one vote reduces the effect more economically and politically powerful nations have on the legislating body. Delegates must keep in mind the General Assembly is to provide solutions that will benefit the world, while not infringing upon national sovereignty.

The topics being discussed in the GA are:

- I. Elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction**
- II. Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism**

Elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction

*"[...]Disarmament is vital today, quite simply, because of the immense destructive capacity of which men dispose."*⁶

The dropping of the two atomic weapons on Japan's cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has never left the minds of the public since the end of World War II. The United States and the Soviet Union stockpiled these

¹ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *'UN welcomes South Sudan as 193rd Member State'*, UN News, last modified 14 July 2011, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2011/07/381552>.

⁵ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

⁶ Selassie, Haile. *"Address to the United Nations General Assembly."* United Nations General Assembly, 6 October 1963, New York City

more notable Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), numbering in the dozens from the late 1940s to early 1950s, before ballooning into the tens of thousands in 1966. The global community saw a threat, not just to two spheres of influence, but to the Earth itself. From that point on where the destruction of humanity was looming, the international community has put forth great efforts to ensure that mankind would never use such weapons again.

While nuclear weapons are the most notable of WMD, it is not limited to that subject alone but inclusive of biological, and/or biological weapons. The definition of WMD has been established as “[...] atomic explosive weapons, radioactive material weapons, lethal chemical and biological weapons, and any weapons developed in the future which might have characteristics comparable in destructive effect to those of the atomic bomb or other weapons mentioned above.”⁷

Many treaties have addressed the issue of WMD such as the Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty of 1996, Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention of 1972, the Geneva Protocol, and Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons to name a few.^{8 9 10 11} These documents provide the basis on which the global governing body has taken steps to limit the proliferation of these materials. Most are multilateral agreements that prohibit the production, stockpiling, and distribution of such weapons and overall have been successful in ensuring that these weapons will not be tools of war.

There are exceptions to the case, most recently in the Syrian Civil War, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Human Rights Watch, the UN, and numerous media conglomerates stated that sarin gas was used in the conflict.^{12 13 14} The deadliest attack occurred on August 2013 in Ghouta, Syria where an estimated 1100 civilians were killed and an estimated 3600 were injured. The aftermath of the numerous attacks forced Syria to destroy its chemical weapon stockpiles and face condemnation on the international stage. Almost a decade earlier, sarin gas was used on the Tokyo subway in 1995 which killed 14 people and injured over 6000 others in an act of domestic religious terrorism.¹⁵

⁷ UN General Assembly, *Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons* (A/RES/32/84), 1977.

⁸ UN General Assembly, *Agreement to regulate the relationship between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization* (A/RES/54/280), 2000.

⁹ UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction*, 1972.

¹⁰ UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, *Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare*, 1925.

¹¹ UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, *Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons*, 2017.

¹² Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, *National Assessment on the Chemical Attack of 7 April 2018 in Douma, Eastern Ghouta, Syrian Arab Republic and Syria's Clandestine Chemical Weapon Programme* (EC-M-58/NAT.3), 2018.

¹³ Charbonneau, Louis. “Suspend Syria’s Rights Under Chemical Weapons Convention.” Human Rights Watch, 20 April 2018.

¹⁴ “Reasonable grounds’ to believe Syrian military helicopter deployed chemical weapon: OPCW,” UN News, last modified 12 April 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1089582>.

¹⁵ Pletcher, K. “Tokyo subway attack of 1995.” Encyclopedia Britannica, March 13, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Tokyo-subway-attack-of-1995>.

The international community generally agrees that WMD at best needs to be eliminated as a whole, and total disarmament must occur for the betterment of humanity. At worse, there is a consensus that WMD is a deterrent against aggressors against legitimate sovereign governments. The UN Security Council established the 1540 Committee to monitor the implementation of Resolution 1540 of 2004.¹⁶ Initially established as a limited organization, it has since been expanded and its roles include: border and export controls, nuclear material protection, prevention of terrorist financing, and other related activities which are verified through report submissions by states. If any issue is to arise, the 1540 Committee does its best to allocate resources to handle these affairs. Other organizations include International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which works with states in implementing and supporting the Non-Proliferation Treaty through inspection of international regulation and promotion of nuclear technology and materials for peaceful use under Article 3 of the statute.¹⁷ ¹⁸ Also, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) which was established by the recommendation from the General Assembly to facilitate disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Correspondingly, it has an expanded mandate to include small arms and land mines.¹⁹

Currently, international community has made great strides in disposing of chemical and biological weapons and materials, but still has a considerable way to go in terms of nuclear weapons and material. Even though bilateral treaties exist between larger states to limit production and use, smaller states that disregard international legislation must be encouraged to the table to ensure that this issue is contained and eventually eliminated. Delegates must look back into the international framework of past successes and failures to close loopholes and develop strategies that make the global community a safer place.

Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism

“We cannot lose to terrorism; we must not yield to brute force.”²⁰

Terrorism has become increasingly prevalent on the global stage and these non-state actors (NSA) are a great threat to the peace and security of the international community. Combat between two nations is no longer the case, but instead third-party actors with backing from larger nations and organizations have become more prevalent. In other cases, these actors do not have the backing from any larger organization and instead wish to exert their religious, political, cultural, and moralistic viewpoints on their home countries and others with little regard to those they hurt. Most notable terrorist acts were the 9/11 attacks in 2001 against the United States, when Al-Qaeda took control of commercial aircrafts and struck New York City and Washington, D.C., killing over two thousand people.²¹ Al-Qaeda struck again in London, England on July 7, 2005 via suicide bombings utilizing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) which killed

¹⁶ UN Security Council, *Resolution 1540 (S/RES/1540)*, 2004.

¹⁷ International Atomic Energy Agency, *The Statute of the IAEA*, 1956.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ UN General Assembly, *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform (A/51/950)*, 1997.

²⁰ “*Beheaded Japanese to be flown home.*” CNN, 1 November 2004, <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/10/31/japan.hostage/index.html>.

²¹ UN Security Council, *Resolution 1368 (S/RES1368)*, 2001.

and wounded over seven hundred people.²² Most recently is the attack by the Islamic State - Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) attack on the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, which was a suicide bombing, followed by a mass shooting. In this attack over four hundred people were killed or injured.²³ These are several examples of major terrorist attacks enacted against nations.

These organizations violate the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations (1945), but the definition of terrorism has never been a concrete stance shared by all nations.²⁴ Since many terrorist organizations operate in regions with consistent conflict, it has been stated that these individuals are resisting their nations governments and armed forces in attempt to garner rights for subjected groups. The regions are but not limited to; Iraq, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Pakistan, India, the Philippines and Turkey.²⁵

Due to these organizations' lack of operating in the legal frameworks provided and the harm they cause to the people of the world, the UN has taken steps to limit their spread and influence. Counter-terrorism frameworks have been established, such as the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy which was adopted by GA resolution 60/288 in 2006.²⁶ It provides a holistic method to combat against terrorism and provides the basic strategies to do so. The UNGA also adopted International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Financing (1999) and International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997).²⁷ ²⁸ Additional counter-terrorism documents include the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages, which classifies such acts as international terrorism.²⁹ There is also the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism (1995) which urges member states to cooperate to bring such perpetrators of horrendous acts. The resolution encourages cooperation by utilizing bilateral and multilateral treaties, counter-terrorism efforts, and the limitation of terrorist organizations from attaining financial and territorial assets in order to operate.³⁰ The UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (UN CTC) which was established in 2001 has updated the means to monitor terrorism. ³¹ This is especially true in the pandemic era with the 2021 publication of "*Update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism*" report which is a survey that evaluates Covid-19's "[...] potential long-term impacts across key thematic areas." ³² The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG) has embedded within it Goal 16 which targets efforts to: "Reduce Violence Everywhere," "Promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice," "Combat organized

²² "Timeline of the 7 July attacks." BBC News, 11 July 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/5032756.stm

²³ Atwood, Kylie; Sciutto, Jim; Starr, Barbara (26 August 2021). "Officials: Explosion at Kabul airport appears to be a suicide attack". CNN. 26 August 2021.

²⁴ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

²⁵ "Our History Peacekeeping." United Nations, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/our-history>.

²⁶ UN General Assembly, *The United Nations Global Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288)*, 2006

²⁷ UN General Assembly, 11. *International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism*, 9 December 1999.

²⁸ UN General Assembly, *International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings*, 15 December 1997

²⁹ UN General Assembly, *International Convention against the taking of hostages*, 17 December 1979.

³⁰ UN General Assembly, *Measures to eliminate international terrorism (A/RES/74/100)*, 1995.

³¹ UN Security Council, *Resolution 1373 (S/RES/1373)*, 2001.

³² UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, "*Update on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism*," 2021.

crime and illicit financial and arms flows,” and most notably “Strengthen national institutions to prevent violence and combat crime and terrorism.”³³

Even though the framework is established, there is still much left to do in the elimination of terrorism across the globe. Regional organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Organization of the African Union (AU) and the Council of Europe have set up their own partnerships to disrupt terrorist organizations.^{34 35 36} The SAARC established the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism of 1995 and the OAU has also established the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism.^{37 38}

Through regional and international operations, the want to disrupt and eliminate terrorist efforts is growing and, in some cases successful. An example of such success is the global community’s fight against ISIS and the destruction of the organization. Even though they still exist to an extent, they do not have the political and territorial gains they had at the extent of their power in 2016. However, many claim and rightly so, that the rise of ISIS to such an extreme should have never occurred. Delegates must focus on international frameworks that will eliminate such organizations from making such gains. Also, they must focus on strengthening the existing international framework.

³³ UN General Assembly, “*Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*” (A/RES/70/1), 2015.

³⁴ Organization of American States, *Charter of the Organization of American States*, 1967.

³⁵ South Association for Regional Cooperation, *Charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation*, 1985.

³⁶ Organization of the African Union, *OAU Charter*, 1963.

³⁷ SAARC, *SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism*, 1985.

³⁸ OAU, *OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism*, 1999.