



HARVARD MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2011

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AND REGIONAL BODIES

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TOPIC AREA SUMMARIES

United Nations Human Rights Council

Anna Yeung, Director

Topic Area A: **Mental Health Rights**

In 1991, the UN passed resolution 46/119, aimed at protecting individuals stricken with mental illness and improvement of the global state of mental healthcare. Nineteen years later, even with the current focus on healthcare reform in the United States, little attention has been paid to the topic of mental health and mental healthcare in the world today. This presents a critical problem because statistics show that mental health is extremely prevalent in countries around the world, with over 150 million individuals affected by depression and 25 individuals affected by schizophrenia.

One major contributor stalling mental healthcare's improvement is the strong stigma it still bears in many cultures. Furthermore, there remains a lack of understanding and research regarding the issue. Unlike physical illnesses, where symptoms of the disease can be objectively observed, the causes of many mental disorders still remain murky because they potentially lie within the brain and are difficult to observe. In fact, due to the ambiguous nature of mental disorders, there is a large faction of society who believes that mental illnesses are not legitimate illnesses in the same way that physical disorders are. Therefore, even the legitimacy of mental illness is thrown into question, and the Human Rights Council must therefore critically analyze current standards for classifying a mental disorder.

In the Human Rights Council, we will consider what stance the UN should do to address this furtive issue. We will analyze the committee's past attempts to address the issue of mental health and strategize potential steps to take in the future. We will look at cultural implications affect our understanding of mental disorders and treatment of mental disorders. We will consider what steps countries should take to educate the public about mental disorders. We will also entertain the debate on whether the UN should create a unified rights system for mental disorders.

Topic Area B: **Access to Pharmaceutical Drugs**

During its 12th session in 2009, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution promoting more universal access to necessary medicine, stating that it is the "responsibility of States to ensure access to all, without discrimination, of medicines, in particular essential medicines, that are affordable." Universal accessibility to pharmaceutical drugs still remains a prominent goal of the global community, promising to save countless lives around the world. This is especially significant in third-world countries, where treatable and preventable diseases like malaria and tuberculosis still claim millions of lives each year because of lack of access to drugs. The Council's discussion intends to critically analyze current factors that are impeding the accessibility of drugs and to identify key steps that states, the UN, and the global community as a whole must take in order to advance the mission of accessibility to life-saving pharmaceuticals.

Central to our discussion of medicine accessibility are international patent laws. Companies invest innumerable resources and time to creating pharmaceutical drugs. However, the UN still believes that everyone should have access to life-saving drugs regardless of whether or not they can afford the high costs associated with patented medicine. In the past, countries have ignored international patent laws in order to produce generic versions of medicine that their populations desperately needed. These countries defend their actions on grounds that access to life-saving drugs is an inherent right to life, and the concept of patents is unlawful because it infringes on that right. A major focus of the Council's discussion will center on this debate and the role that the UN must take as an intermediary and whether there is a right to medicine and healthcare.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Sharon Teng, Director

Topic Area A: **Financial Regulation**

In September 2008, the financial meltdown in the US triggered a global credit crunch, and the world economy experienced its first contraction since World War II. Before the crisis, mainstream economists argued that the complexity of the financial instruments increased the stability of the financial system, but free markets without prudent regulation proved to be a significant systemic risk. There are serious flaws in the global financial system, which call for timely, prudent regulation. UNCTAD seeks to add an international dimension to financial regulation in order to ensure sustainable development and financial stability across the globe. However, regulation is not a one-size-fits-all solution. For developed countries, there is a tradeoff between expansion and stability; developing countries aim to employ more sophisticated financial instruments, but highly complex financial instruments do not necessarily increase their economic and social welfare. UNCTAD will examine the role and necessity of financial regulation in this changed economic climate.

Topic Area B: **Regionalization of Free Trade**

In 1990, the number of trade agreements reported to the World Trade Organization totaled 20. Since then, that number has increased significantly, from 86 in 2000 to 159 in 2007. The majority of the agreements codified in the last 20 years have been bilateral, with a still sizable number of regional free trade agreements. This trend has grown out of a sense of frustration with the slow and at times stalled progress in multilateral negotiations. However, some have criticized this proliferation of bilateral and regional trade agreements on the grounds that they have led to increased discrimination in world trade. UNCTAD will examine the proliferation of free trade agreements and determine how best to manage their intricate webs in the face of crawling progress on the multilateral trade front.

United Nations Development Programme

Jimmy Wu, Director

Topic Area A: **Future of Aid to Haiti**

After an earthquake in December 2009 devastated much of Haiti, the world was quick to provide much needed relief. The coordinated actions of the United Nations, United States Army and international relief organizations saved perhaps hundreds of thousands of lives. Yet, the challenges for Haiti in the future remain immense. The United Nations Development Programme has immediately implemented “cash for work” programs that provide Haitians with short-term jobs in helping to cleanup the wreckage of the earthquake. Yet, it is clear that a long-term plan is necessary for future international involvement in Haiti.

While Haiti’s long-run recovery is multifaceted, requiring stronger public institutions, responsible government, and outside investment, UNDP will discuss the future of international aid in Haiti. Over the past decade, the Haitian government has received over US \$4 billion in aid, much of it coming from the United States. Still, Haiti’s development has not improved significantly. During the recent relief efforts, the USAID program contributed over US \$700 million in rapid response recovery. Future proposals must rely on more targeted aid and involve a broader coalition of countries willing to commit to the future of the Haiti. How will the UNDP propose that Haiti receive future aid in a way that will promote successful governance and strong development?

Topic Area B: **HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis**

Over the past decades, three diseases in particular have ravaged Africa: HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis (TB). Coordinated international efforts have done a great deal to alleviate the suffering of millions throughout the continent. Yet while programs like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria continue to succeed in providing basic treatments for these diseases, there remain many other dangerous problems. Part of the reason particularly virulent diseases continue to spread, largely in Sub-Saharan Africa, is the rampant lack of basic healthcare facilities. While the sixth Millennium Development Goal is to “Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases”, the biggest obstacle remains access to basic facilities and treatment. Additionally, MDGs 4 and 5 call for reducing childhood mortality and increasing maternal health, which are irrevocably tied with a lack of healthcare facilities.

The United Nations Development Programme is involved in a variety of poverty reduction programs throughout the world. Creating programs specifically targeting the creation of small-scale but accessible health care clinics and facilities to promote basic primary health and combating infectious diseases is essential for the future of Africa. A healthier population has been shown to significantly increasing the economic vitality and productivity of nations. Furthermore, this proposal requires a global initiative and coordination similar to the way the Global Fund have harnessed international support in its proposals. How should the UNDP proceed in creating programs to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and TB?

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Keren Robe, Director

Topic Area A: **Water Accessibility**

Water is a limited resource that is necessary for human life on earth. With the increase of population in Asia, access to clean water for all people is becoming more and more of a problem. Even areas with large amounts of rain are in danger of water deficiency, due to the need for water in both households and agriculture, and due to the dangers of contaminated water. Over 1.2 billion people, or about one-fifth of the world's population, do not have regular access to clean water. With its overpopulation problems and poverty, Asia is especially in danger of water scarcity.

A lack of action has left hundreds of millions in Asia disconnected from water sources, forcing them into a state of human insecurity. ESCAP must adopt a development agenda that places water security at its center to accelerate the attainment of a basic right--the human right to life. ESCAP must find eco-efficient ways to provide clean, reliable water sources to every citizen of every country, and this must be done quickly. What sorts of issues must ESCAP address in order to create appropriate, efficient water-resource programs?

Topic Area B: **Urban Development**

Currently, 1.6 billion people and 40 percent of Asians live in urban areas. By 2030, 2.7 billion people (a majority) will live in cities and towns. With this rapid demographic shift happening in Asia, much of the world's future will depend on how well Asian cities function. Even though Asian cities and towns are economic and cultural centers, producing over 80 percent of the region's GDP, over 40 percent of Asia's urban residents live in slums, without shelter or basic services.

Asia's cities are at a turning point in their development, and the opportunity to make them inclusive and sustainable will not last forever. Inaction would lead to an urbanization of poverty, causing social instability and environmental degradation for years to come. In order to meet these challenges, ESCAP must focus on creating policies to alleviate urban poverty, improve the urban environment, and deal with the effects of climate change in urban centers. How should ESCAP proceed in creating programs to address these problems?

Alliance of Civilizations

Amrita Dani, Director

Topic Area A: **Religious Education in the 21st Century**

Differences on the basis of religion have come to divide the world in recent years, most prominently in the misunderstandings between Islam and the "West." These perceived differences have had a major impact on foreign affairs, from the American war on terror to suicide bombings in Indonesia, from Turkey's petition to join the E.U. to the Israel-Palestine crisis. The Alliance of Civilizations believes strongly that the way to improve inter-religious understanding is through existing avenues of education around the world, and to this end, it has made the diversification of religious education a high priority area. Religious education has the power to open new avenues of trust and understanding between people of different faiths, but it also has the potential to generate hatred, racism, and intolerance. In all of the major world religions, the latter has often overpowered educational discourse, and moreover, the diversity within religions has made it challenging to institute large-scale reform. It is the goal of this committee to attempt this rather daunting, though necessary, task by devising practical and creative educational initiatives that address both the similar concerns of all religious education systems and the unique considerations of various regional programs. Through these efforts, we will hopefully be able to remedy the political tensions of our era through grassroots outreach and social change in the realm of religion.

Topic Area B: **The Politics of Migration: Veiling in Western Europe**

Part of the Alliance of Civilizations' mission is to address the issues of immigrant communities within the context of larger society, especially when looking at Muslims living in the West. The politics of migration are, of course, tricky to navigate, especially where they bring into conflict values of multiculturalism and of nationalism. For example, much of Western Europe has recently been dealing with a large influx of Muslim immigrants from all parts of the world, and this migration has posed unique challenges for the governments and societies of these nations. The Muslim practice of wearing the hijab (or veiling) has been a particularly interesting phenomenon, especially when considering the roles it plays in education - where girls wearing the veil are seen to be disruptive- and national security - where the veil is a symbol of the violence of Islam. Veiling has thus been a symbol for the issues of integration and diversity posed by migrant communities, especially Islamic ones, to Western Europe. The Alliance of Civilizations considers this issue to be worth addressing on the level of social policy and cultural movements, by increasing awareness and understanding of the Islamic context of veiling. Thus, the delegates of the Alliance will have to devise innovative solutions to the situation at hand in order to promote inter-cultural understanding that will disseminate stereotypes and eventually bring an end to discrimination.

123rd Session, International Olympic Committee

Sam Pokross, Director

Topic Area A: **Gender Disparity**

Because the Olympics are the pinnacle of sporting competition, the policies of the International Olympic Committee set a precedence for athletics around the world. The committee's decision to add or drop a sport from the Olympic program, for example, can have a significant impact on its international popularity. Many argue that the IOC should use this influence as a way of improving athletic policies throughout the world. Specifically, there has been a strong push in recent years for gender equality in all aspects of the Olympic Games. In terms of the actual sporting events, men have the right to compete in more events and win more medals than women. Immediately before the 2010 Winter Games, a group of female ski jumpers sued the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VOC) for refusing to allow them to compete when the city had already set up a venue for the men. Although they lost the suit and could not compete, the ski jumpers' lawyers claimed that it is unfair to allow one gender and not the other to participate in an event. In the past, the IOC has argued that because of financial restrictions, it must impose strict rules about the qualifications for a sport to be included in the Olympic Program. The committee must decide whether or not the precedence it could set by fixing the gender disparity in the Olympic program is worth the financial burden.

Additionally, critics claim that the IOC has been slow to respond to the calls for gender reform because of the composition of the committee itself. Fewer than a fourth of the IOC delegates are women, and Executive Board has only one female member. The IOC may have not prioritized the issue of gender because so few of its members have historically been female. The committee will therefore have to discuss reforming not only the sporting events at the Olympics but also the structure of the IOC itself.

Topic Area B: **Selection of Host City for the XXIII Olympic Winter Games**

The Olympics are arguably the world's most important sporting event. For two weeks every two years, sporting events fill the front pages of the world's newspapers and take over the world's television. Viewers from every country watch and scrutinize both the athletes and the host city. When the members of the IOC select a location for the Olympic Games, they are making a decision that will permanently alter the host city. After seven years of preparation and billions of dollars of expenses, the host city welcomes thousands of athletes for two weeks of competition. The attention of the world focuses on the host city, as they scrutinize every decision that the organizing committee makes. Although many cities lose a significant amount of money hosting the Olympics, the name recognition that comes with being a host city is unsurpassable. The IOC takes a wide range of factors into account when choosing an Olympic city, including the proposed venues, transportation, and public support.

The 123rd IOC Session will select the host city for the XXIII Olympic Winter Games to be held in 2018. Three cities have submitted bid proposals to the IOC for consideration. Annecy, France is pushing its extensive infrastructure and its high public support. Although they have a technically strong bid, France has hosted the Olympics more times than Germany and South Korea combined. Munich, Germany is stressing its environmentally friendly construction plans and its reuse of venue from the 1972 Summer Olympics. While Germany has a storied history of success in winter sports, Munich has much lower public approval than the other two cities. Finally, PyeongChang, South Korea is emphasizing its commitment to spreading winter sports throughout Asia and its newly built ski resort. PyeongChang is due for a victory after two failed bids, but some worry that there is not enough enthusiasm for winter sports in Korea. Whichever city the IOC chooses will begin immediately to prepare for 2018 Winter Games. Although this decision might appear as a petty choice for a sporting event, the IOC will have perhaps more power than any other committee at the conference to radically alter the future of a region and its inhabitants.

Peace of Westphalia, 1648

Nicandro Iannacci, Director

Topic Area A: **Future of the Holy Roman Empire**

The political dominion of the Holy Roman Empire has long been established in the halls of power. Its first emperor, the Frankish king Charlemagne, was crowned by Pope Leo III in 800 AD after he rushed to the aid of the Vatican against the oppression of Rome. This traditional coronation of the Emperor – a convention that ended with the reign of Charles V – established a close relationship between the Empire and the Catholic Church. Yet the relationship has long been unsettling to the numerous kings, dukes, princes and more who have struggled to exercise independent sovereignty over their local territory. The current system of imperial election, by which a candidate to be “King of the Romans” has to win a majority of eight eligible electors, lends itself to local power de facto. Still, fear of imperial interference remains poignant and keeps local authorities on the defensive. Now, after the Thirty Years’ War has torn apart its land and destroyed its power, the future of the Empire remains unclear. Parties to the Peace must determine how the Holy Roman Empire might be reformed or restructured – or not restructured – and must decide what claims to particular cities or regions will be validated in the new political order.

Topic Area B: **Political Status of Religion**

After a war fought essentially over religious determination, countries face the challenge of determining the limits of secular power in determining religious practice. Religious affiliation within the Holy Roman Empire and Europe itself varies according to region and tradition. Indeed, a constant source of tension within the Holy Roman Empire has been the division of religious authority among a Catholic Emperor and largely Protestant principalities. Furthermore, the reigning legal authority on religious matters – the Peace of Augsburg, signed in 1555 following warfare between Charles V and the Schmalkaldic League – gives a legal basis for the practice of Lutheranism and Catholicism. Yet what is the legal basis for other religious sects, such as Calvinism and Anabaptism? Moreover, the reigning powers of Europe – including Catholic France and Protestant Sweden – have a keen interest in the outcome of the war. Who has the final say – domestic or foreign – in permitting or preventing religious organization and practice within the Empire and beyond? How can the strengths and shortcomings of the Peace of Augsburg be improved upon in the new agreement? Parties to the Peace must seek a peaceful solution or face a resurgence of war.

United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan, 1947

Karen Kim, Director

Topic Area A: **Humanitarian Crisis in Kashmir**

In 1947, both India and Pakistan formally declared war against another, mobilizing some 1,000,000 and 300,000 combat forces respectively. While the numbers of casualties are still unclear, approximately 1,500 soldiers lay dead on each side with 3,000 additional civilian casualties until the UN-mediated ceasefire in 1949.

Reenacting the military and humanitarian concerns during the first Indo-Pakistan War of 1947, the UNCIP Member States are called upon to devise ways to protect civilians in Jammu and Kashmir in amidst a virtual civil war within the region. Given the state of war, Member States would have to devise creative methods to provide protection from conflict, along with food, shelter, and medical supplies for the affected families. Issues that must be addressed include ensuring basic sanitary conditions and access to freshwater resources, especially for those who reside in the mountainous regions.

A catalyst to the escalation in violence is the presence of militarized Islamic tribal groups that aim to overthrow Indian rule.

These tribal groups have stirred tensions and division among religious lines—Hindu versus Muslim—in a region where the two groups have mingled over hundreds of years. In some areas, villages and towns have formed around religious communities, while in other areas, through years of resettlement and intermarriage, populations have integrated into a single community. The ignited enmity among religious minority groups, have spurred fear of discrimination and violence. Suppressing militancy of these tribal groups that instill fear in civilians is a key to quelling the conflict and mitigating humanitarian violations. The UNCIP has few options in dealing with the militancy of tribal groups—holding diplomatic talks with leaders of the tribal groups, exercising power to mobilize MOGIP to quell the tribal groups as a third party, or backing the operations of one country to stop the violence.

At the end of the day, India and Pakistan must come to an agreement on ceasefire in order to bring an end to the humanitarian crisis. Holding talks with the two opposing parties, as well as other international actors and regional leaders would help facilitate communication among the different interest groups that are fueling the conflict and hold the key to resolving the conflict. The MOGIP also has the authority to intervene in conflicts when necessary, thus it is up to the discretion of the committee to exercise its power to intervene if utmost necessary.

Topic Area B: **Territorial Settlement in Kashmir**

Drawing the territorial boundary for Kashmir has been the root cause of the conflict in the region. Apart from the ethnic division in Kashmir, the political motive that is driving both countries is geopolitical importance of the Kashmir region. The Jammu and Kashmir region has contiguous boundaries with China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Russia, rendering it a politically, economically, and militarily strategic region. Furthermore, the endowment of physical resources in the region, such as lignite, a poorer quality of coal found in the Kashmir valley, limestone in all three states of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, iron ore and copper ore deposits, could be utilized to fuel growth of industrial power. Consequently, the accession of this region is deemed important to determining the relative strength and status of the new-born state.

Given strong national interests in the Kashmir region, how could India and Pakistan agree on a territorial boundary while respecting the opinion of the residents of Kashmir? The UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan holds the authority to mobilize its troops to legitimize a territorial boundary that could eventually become permanent. Settling on which parts would be acceded to India or Pakistan, or even gain independence, would be the first step towards a viable solution.

The UNCIP would attempt to actually examine a map and draft a resolution that identifies the territorial boundaries. The Member States would have to take into consideration the population and politics of specific provinces, such as Udhampur, Jammu, and Kashmir, the interests of India and Pakistan, and other surrounding neighbors to reach a consensus. In the real course of history, the UN drafted a resolution that ordered the Pakistani troops to withdraw and determine accession to India or Pakistan based on a UN-monitored plebiscite. The success of the plebiscite is arguable as a permanent solution to the conflict as the issue persists till today. Whether self-determination is the most practical, morally, and politically sound solution will probably become the core of the debate for this topic.