General Assembly

Directed By: Dixie Johnston

TSMUN XXIV BACKGROUND GUIDE 2020

**Topic I: Strengthening the Coordination to Combat Human Trafficking**

**Topic II: Preventing the Used of Children in Armed Conflicts**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Tallahassee Southern Model United Nations (TSMUN)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the General Assembly (GA). My name is Dixie Johnston, and I’m a nursing major at Tallahassee Community College (TCC). I was the recipient of the 2017 TSMUN scholarship and currently serve as the TCC MUN president. I have attended National Model UN conferences in Canada, New York City, Washington D.C, and Germany. I look forward to seeing how delegates will approach the complex issues before the GA.

The topics under discussion for the General Assembly are:

1. I. Strengthening the Coordination to Combat Human Trafficking
2. II. Preventing the Use of Children in Armed Conflicts

I hope you find the information within this background guide to be a valuable tool for your preparations towards the conference. I would like to remind you that the background guide should serve as an introduction to your topics, and strongly encourage delegates conduct supplemental research in regard to the positions, views, and opinions of their Member State. Additionally, I suggest delegates take a look at international and regional organizations or frameworks that are pertinent to the topics.

Every delegation must submit a position paper before the start of the first committee session on February 14th, 2020. Papers should be submitted through a USB drive, hard copy, or emailed to positionpapers@tsmun.org . Position papers are submitted in preparation for the conference, so if you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me at ga@tsmun.org . Also make sure to review the position paper guide at <http://www.tsmun.org/position-papers.html>. At this link you will find example position papers and basic expectations for the conference. As a reminder, any papers that are not in the correct format will not be eligible for awards. For conference information, additional resources, and any other information visit <http://www.tsmun.org/>. Additionally, our Secretary-General, Mónica García Vega, is available at sg@tsmun.org for any questions or concerns you may have.

I would like to take the opportunity to encourage any high school senior at the time of the conference to apply for the TSMUN TCC scholarship opportunity. Every year TSMUN awards a full scholarship to students who are interested in participating on TCC's award winning MUN team. As a recipient of this scholarship, I cannot begin to tell you the benefits I have received through my participation that go beyond that of tuition. For criteria, eligibility, and the application please refer to <http://www.tsmun.org/tcc-model-un-scholarships.html>. I look forward to seeing you all at the conference!

Sincerely,

Dixie Johnson,

General Assembly Director

ga@tsmun.org

**Committee Overview**

***Introduction***

Since the creation of the United Nations (UN) the General Assembly (GA) has served as one of the six principal organs of the UN established by the *Charter of the United Nations*.[[1]](#footnote-1) All Member States of the UN are represented in each main Committee of the GA.[[2]](#footnote-2) The GA has six main committees, which each issue a report to the General Assembly Plenary based upon their specific purpose.[[3]](#footnote-3) The GA Plenary can request and receive reports from any UN organ, but does not have to report to any other group since it is a principal body of the UN.[[4]](#footnote-4) Only matters adopted by the Plenary are considered official UN GA resolutions.[[5]](#footnote-5) The General Assembly Plenary can also discuss reform of the United Nations system, such as the reform of the Security Council (SC), which includes membership numbers, veto power, working methods, and the relationship between the SC and the General Assembly.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The GA has multiple functions and powers, which are specifically outlined in Chapter IV of the UN Charter.[[7]](#footnote-7) Within this chapter the GA is given the authority to make recommendations on internal peace and security, discuss the UN Charter, approve the UN budget, and as previously stated discuss reports from other bodies within the UN system.[[8]](#footnote-8) In addition to this, the GA has the ability to make recommendations on a multitude of topics and issues.[[9]](#footnote-9) These topics include: international political cooperation, development improvement and sustainability, and human rights.[[10]](#footnote-10) Overall, the GA strives to create peace by forming habits of cooperation and sparking discussions for new policies and universal norms.[[11]](#footnote-11)

***History***

With the adoption of the *Charter of the United Nations*, the General Assembly was founded in 1945.[[12]](#footnote-12) The first meeting was held in January 1946, in which 51 Member States were represented.[[13]](#footnote-13) Within the same year, the General Assembly adopted their first resolution, which focused on the use of atomic energy in peaceful ways and the eradication of weapons of mass destruction, including atomic weapons given the recent conclusion of World War II.[[14]](#footnote-14)

One of the most recent impactful resolutions adopted by the GA was the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a plan composed of 17 goals that act as a “shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and planet.”[[15]](#footnote-15) At the time of this agenda’s fruition in 2015, the UN was experiencing a landmark time for multilateralism and international teamwork.[[16]](#footnote-16) With policies such

as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which specifically aims to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to prevent global temperature increase, also being adopted.[[17]](#footnote-17) The major factor that sets the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) apart from other GA resolutions is the fact that it has influenced the creation of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG), which under the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), provides support to help reach each goal by 2030.[[18]](#footnote-18) The UNDESA allows for evaluation of systemwide implementation on SDG advocacy and outreach programs aimed to improve issues such as energy, climate, and urbanization.[[19]](#footnote-19) The DSDG is an example of the unique understanding that the SDGs create in the fact that it takes multilateral commitment and implementation to truly progress towards change and embody the purpose of the UN.[[20]](#footnote-20)

***Governance, Structure, and Membership***

While comprised of a total of 193 Member States, the Charter allows for observer status to be granted to intergovernmental organizations such as states without complete UN membership.[[21]](#footnote-21) The State of Palestine and the Holy See are currently the only non-Member States with permanent Observer status.[[22]](#footnote-22) This mean that States or organizations with observer status have the ability to discuss issues at hand with other Member States of the GA, however, they are not allowed to cast a vote regarding the pass or fail of any constructed agendas.[[23]](#footnote-23) A State becomes a of the GA by submitting a formal application to the Secretary-General of the UN. These applications must include a declaration of intent, made formally to state that the nation in question accepts the obligations contained in the Charter.[[24]](#footnote-24) This application is sent to the Security Council (SC) to receive additional information, and if the SC recommends the State’s membership then their admittance is dependent upon a two-thirds majority vote by the GA. [[25]](#footnote-25) As stated in the *Charter of the United Nations,* the General Assembly has the power to “consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament” and “discuss, with the same exception, and make recommendations on any questions within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations.”[[26]](#footnote-26) These powers given to the GA by the Charter are very unique because of the fact that they were only given to the GA. No other body within the UN can call upon another committee, through collaboration and review, to address needs within their given jurisdiction.[[27]](#footnote-27) An example of the GA exercising governance granted within The Charter was in 2001 when Member States Adopted the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.[[28]](#footnote-28) By the GA recognizing that HIV/AIDS epidemic greatly impacted the quality of live for countless individuals in every Member State it proved to be a major turning point in AIDS response. [[29]](#footnote-29) While the GA holds much power within the UN, agendas and resolutions passed by its Member States are not legally binding and participation is on a voluntary basis.[[30]](#footnote-30) For example, if a Member State does not wish to enforce the actions needed to achieve the goals set forth by the Paris Agreement, there is no legal action that can be done to make them do so. This is generally how the UN operates in order to protect the sovereignty of each of its participating Member States.[[31]](#footnote-31)

***Conclusion***

**As the epicenter for intergovernmental cooperation, the GA has the ability to shape social norms and influence common standards within the international community. The landmark Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000, and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals were both monumental implementations by the General Assembly. While items adopted do not automatically become a part of international law, it does reflect the commitment of Member States in terms of working towards an ever improving world to impact countless lives. The work done within this committee is unparalleled, and it is up to future generations to uphold the work to be carried out. I. Strengthening the Coordination to Combat Human Trafficking**

***Introduction***

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines trafficking in persons as “the acquisition of people by improper means such as force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them” [[32]](#footnote-32) Often trafficking functions in hand with the smuggling of migrants, which “involves the procurement for financial or other material benefits of illegal entry of a person into a State of which that person is not a national or resident.” [[33]](#footnote-33) Meaning that individuals are often taken from their typical place of residence, across a form of international border, and used for monetary benefit. Nearly every Member State within the global community are being affected by these forms of crimes. [[34]](#footnote-34) The main struggle in combating the persistency of these occurrences is the fact that many criminals target and select individuals in areas of conflict or poverty. [[35]](#footnote-35) Many victims are simply searching for better lives, and as a result of exploitation of trafficking have endured inconceivable circumstances.[[36]](#footnote-36)

***Current Situation***

In 2019 UNDOC released a *Global Report on Trafficking* *In Persons* to provide updated statistical information on human trafficking. [[37]](#footnote-37) This report collected data from 155 Member States, and became the first global assessment on the scope of trafficking in persons and what actions are being taken to combat it. [[38]](#footnote-38) This report offers an overview of trafficking patterns, legal steps in response, and specific country information of reported cases of trafficking. [[39]](#footnote-39) According to this report, 79 percent of human trafficking is sexual exploitation. With victims primarily being women and young girls, in 30 percent of Member States involved with the sample perpetrators of trafficking were also predominantly women.[[40]](#footnote-40) Forced Labor was the second common most form of trafficking, at 18 percent. [[41]](#footnote-41) This statistic may be a misrepresentation of the data given that forced labor is not often detected or reported. [[42]](#footnote-42) Often, if an individual reports concerning circumstances there is no substantive proof that an individual is being forced to preform manual labor.[[43]](#footnote-43) This is mostly attributable to the fact that the captive individual will not openly say they are being held against their will for fear of retaliation from their captors.[[44]](#footnote-44) The coerced cooperation of captives is what these individuals rely on in order to make profits, so they often expose these individuals to atrocious conditions.[[45]](#footnote-45) Internationally, almost 20 percent of all trafficking victims are children, however, in certain regions children make up the majority of trafficked individuals.

It is important to note that these statistics are pulled directly from a 2019 study by a credited United Nations (UN) organization. For many individuals, they believe that human trafficking is not something that is prevalent within their Member State. This could possibly be attributed to the fact that prosecuting defenders, especially if they have crossed Member State borders, is incredibly difficult given the fact collecting enough credible evidence across boundaries requires extensive coordination.[[46]](#footnote-46)

At this time, there is only a singular force focusing on the criminal justice aspect of these crimes and that is the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNCTOC). [[47]](#footnote-47) The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted by General Assembly (GA) resolution 55/25 in 2000, is the main international instrument in the fight against transnational organized crime, which includes targeting sources of trafficking and smuggling of people.[[48]](#footnote-48) This means that this organization is tailored to handle instances of crime that involve multiple individuals, involved in multiple crimes, in numerous Member States. In 2003 the GA adopted resolution 55/25, The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.[[49]](#footnote-49) As the first legally binding instrument to agree upon a definition of trafficking in persons, the intention was to better facilitate the unionization of national approaches with regards to the establishment of domestic criminal offences, in order to encourage international coordination and cooperation in investigating/prosecuting trafficking in persons cases. [[50]](#footnote-50)

***Actions Taken by the UN***

UNDOC, in partnership with the European Union (EU), has founded the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT). [[51]](#footnote-51) The overall goal of GLO.ACT is to prevent trafficking and smuggling in 13 target countries by implementing national counter-trafficking/smuggling efforts. [[52]](#footnote-52) Execution of this plan is carried out through a partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) through 2019.[[53]](#footnote-53)

In 1997 UNDOC established the Blue Heart Campaign (BHC), with the goal to “raise awareness of the plight of victims and to build political support to fight the criminals behind trafficking”.[[54]](#footnote-54) The Blue Heart is designed to represent the sadness of those who are trafficked while reminding everyone of the “cold-heartedness” of those who partake in the trade of fellow human beings.[[55]](#footnote-55) In 2010 the GA approved the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, to which the BHC donates all proceeds.[[56]](#footnote-56)

The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) was policy action taken by the GA in hopes to improve collaboration between UN affiliates and agencies in order to ensure an atmosphere that promotes comprehensive protection and support for victims of trafficking.[[57]](#footnote-57) Created in 2006 in response to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) *Resolution 2006/27* that requested intergovernmental agencies to strengthen technical assistance in areas of heightened trafficking, ICAT functions to: provide a platform for information exchange, promote international organizations support activities, collaborate in a specific gender and age-sensitive based approaches, and sustainably work for effective and existing resources/programs by using mechanisms already acting both regionally and nationally. [[58]](#footnote-58)

***Regional and International Framework***

The Human Trafficking Knowledge Portal is a case law database of official court documented cases relating to trafficking in persons. [[59]](#footnote-59) The main objective of this database is to aid in the UNCTOC Protocol *to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons*, Especially Women and Children by allowing the information to be more transparent, and to highlight successful prosecution of crime.[[60]](#footnote-60) One of the hopes of this database is that it gives users the ability to inform themselves about the real implications and issues surrounding trafficking in persons to spread awareness to the general population.[[61]](#footnote-61) Similarly to the Human Trafficking Knowledge Portal, the Smuggling of Migrants Knowledge Portal acts in many of the same manners. One of the distinct differences it that this portal promotes a uniform set of the international tools that aim to extinguish transnational crimes.[[62]](#footnote-62) It also pushes to expand the general knowledge of migrant smuggling crimes, with specific attention paid to unfit circumstances victimized individuals face.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Under the guidance of the United Nations Human Rights (UNHR) Office of the High Commission, the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons is a forum that was created so that inter-governmental organizations could join forces to prevent and combat human trafficking.[[64]](#footnote-64) This has allowed for a cohesive base to be built up-on by every Member State, so that when an individual is prosecuted they have information that is universally admissible for prosecution. [[65]](#footnote-65)

***Conclusion***

The countless individuals who have been victimized by trafficking in persons is quickly growing into an issue of international crisis. Many do not even realize the gravity of the situation, or how staunching the issue may be imbedded within their region. This aloof view of the issue by the general public may be some of the reason why there is not an international uproar regarding the subject. Member States continuously struggle to bring the perpetrators of these human trafficking organizations to justice due to a lack of resources and a lack of collaboration with its surrounding constituents. If there is not a unified call to action to end these practices what will become of the insurmountable individuals whom are just looking for a better life? What will become of those who are suffering in areas where there is no proper access to report the circumstances they have been forced to endure? Is there a need to create more collaborative bodies to solve the issue, or a refinement of existing bodies to better allocate resources?

**II. Preventing the Use of Children in Armed Conflicts**

***Introduction***

Under the International Human rights law, the declared minimum age for recruitment and use of children in hostilities is 18 years of age.[[66]](#footnote-66) The international Criminal Court defines the use or recruitment of any child under 15 years of age as a soldier as a war crime.[[67]](#footnote-67) All parties that engage in conflicts that are involved in any of the aforementioned tactics are highlighted in the annexes by the Secretary-General of the UN in their annual report on children and armed conflict. [[68]](#footnote-68)

Created in 1996, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict GA mandate delegated the collection of information on children involved with the negative consequences of war in order to raise awareness.[[69]](#footnote-69) By creating a basis that promoted international cooperation on strengthening the means of protection for children engulfed in armed conflict, this resolution defined and prohibited six violations most affecting children during times of war.[[70]](#footnote-70) These six violations create a baseline for the uniform definition on reportable offences taken against children in these circumstances, and they are as follows: killing and maiming of children, recruitment or use of children as soldiers, sexual violence against children, abduction of children, attacks against schools or hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access for children.[[71]](#footnote-71)

***Current Situation***

There are numerous ways for children to become involved with armed coalitions. Circumstances range from abuse and abduction to voluntary enlistment.[[72]](#footnote-72) Regardless of their reasoning, many conflicts involve direct child combat, but this is not the only way a child can be exploited for the purpose of war. [[73]](#footnote-73) Many children, of both genders, carry out general support roles, acts of espionage, and are used for sexual exploitation.[[74]](#footnote-74) The 2007 Paris Principals on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, an annual UNICEF collaboration summit, defines a child soldier as “a child associated with an armed force or armed group refers to any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies, or for sexual purposes.” [[75]](#footnote-75)

According to the 2018 UN Secretary-General Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, a record number of children harmed or killed in armed conflicted since the UN started recording and documenting occurrences.[[76]](#footnote-76) In total, there were 24,000 verified violations by numerous organizations in the 20 conflict areas being monitored by the Children and Armed Conflict agenda.[[77]](#footnote-77) These growing statistics are why the UN placed UNICEF in charge initiating the healing process for recovered victims of these crimes.[[78]](#footnote-78) While many efforts are made by numerous UN bodies to physically remove these children from direct harm, UNICEF takes a particular role in reintegrating former war-exploited children into war-free society.[[79]](#footnote-79) Their primary priority is to psychologically prepare these children for their return to a civilian life-style, and this is done through means of counselling, education, training, and other important aspects. [[80]](#footnote-80)

***Actions Taken By the UN***

In 2000 the GA adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. [[81]](#footnote-81) This protocol is a Member State’s voluntary commitment to protect all children under the age of 18 from recruitment and use in hostilities and affirms that they will not take part in the recruitment of children under the age of 18. [[82]](#footnote-82) It also states that Member States should partake in all possible measures to prevent such recruitment, including legislatively. Enacted in 2002, it has been ratified by 194 Member States, with South Sudan and Somalia abstaining due to ongoing issues with child soldiers in their state militaries, and the United States due to its allowing individuals to enlist in the military at the age of 16. [[83]](#footnote-83)

In 2014 UNICEF and the Special Representative launched a campaign named “Children, Not Soldiers” to reinforce a global consensus that it is inexcusable to use children in conflict.[[84]](#footnote-84)

With the campaign receiving immediate support from Member States, UN, NGOs, and the general public, the UN Security Council and GA requested regular updated through the Special Representatives.[[85]](#footnote-85) At the time of “Children, Not Soldiers” conception launch representatives from countries of concern, such as Afghanistan, Chad, and Yemen, were invited to attend to show support of the objective.[[86]](#footnote-86) Since the campaign ended in 2016 much progress has been seen and many children have been released and reintegrated, however, crisis still continued in many Member States.[[87]](#footnote-87)

***Regional and International Frameworks***

On July 12th, 2019 the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict launched the campaign “ACT to Protect Children Affected by Conflict.”[[88]](#footnote-88) This awareness campaign aims to stir international efforts towards bringing the six grave violations to a swift halt. [[89]](#footnote-89) By strengthening means of collaboration between national, regional, and international forces.[[90]](#footnote-90) The ACT will take place for three consecutive years and target regions already involved in, or particularly susceptible to conflicts. [[91]](#footnote-91)

Under the guidance of UNICEF, two major UN groups were formed in February 2007 at the Free Children From War conference in Paris in response to the alarming rates of children in conflict at the time.[[92]](#footnote-92) These groups were named the “*Paris Commitments to Protect Children from Unlawful Recruitment or Use by Armed Forces or Armed Groups”* and the “*Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups*” [[93]](#footnote-93) Together, these groups work to provide consolidation in regards to humanitarian knowledge and expertise to act as a resource for organizations working to tackle multiple aspects behind this major issue.[[94]](#footnote-94) During the UN GA annual session these groups partake in follow-up forums to promote the Paris commitments and the Paris principles to encourage the use of outlined funding, advocacy, and coordination efforts to better consolidate the disbarment of children in conflict.[[95]](#footnote-95)

***Conclusion***

Overall, there is a vast need for international and governmental collaborative efforts to stop the use of children in armed conflicts. The statistics demonstrate that this is a global issue that is affecting numerous Member States in a multitude of ways. Children are being forced into circumstances that can leave lasting traumatic psychological impacts, if they are able to survive inhumane conditions. Many regions are struggling to properly address the recruitment or subsequent abduction of children by organizations like non-state actors. What are actions that can be taken to address this need? Are there UN bodies or organizations that were not address in this guide that could provide substantive aid? Once these children are integrated into society, what means of follow-up are being provided to ensure their lives are prosperous?

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