GA3
STUDY
GUIDE
Overview of the Committee

The General Assembly allocates to the Third Committee, agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that affect people all over the world.

As in previous sessions, an important part of the work of the Committee will focus on the examination of human rights questions, including reports of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council which was established in 2006. In October 2020, the Committee will hear and interact with special rapporteurs, independent experts, and chairs of working groups as mandated by the Human Rights Council.

The Committee also discusses questions relating to the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination. The Committee also addresses important social development questions such as issues related to youth, family, ageing, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control.
Practice Debate 01

Discussing the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic with special emphasis on its impact on existing humanitarian crises.

Overview

A crisis is any event that is going to lead to an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, community, or whole society. A definition of a crisis, does not only translate to war or a global pandemic but even its consequences of increased food shortages, mass unemployment and firms being vulnerable to bankruptcy can be viewed as localised crises.

Humanity was caught unprepared by the recent global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even as science and technology developed beyond anyone's imagination, the pandemic not only unexpectedly affected society's social and economic lives, but also disrupted people's mental health and well-being. Millions of people around the world suddenly became prisoners in their own homes, and almost every economic activity in many countries stopped. Repeated supply and demand shocks also caused contractions from production to consumption throughout the entire supply chain. Inevitably, the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic can only be won if vaccines against the conceivably destructive infection caused by the novel coronavirus is developed, and for the first time in decades, countries around the world don't know what to do.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide as we face an unparalleled threat to public health, food supplies and the world of work. The economic and social damage created by the pandemic is devastating: tens of millions of people are at risk of slipping into extreme poverty, while the number of undernourished people, currently estimated at nearly 690 million by the WHO, could grow by up to 132 million by the end of the year.

Millions of companies currently face an imminent threat of bankruptcy. Almost half of the world's 3.3 billion workers are at risk of losing their livelihoods. Informal economy workers are especially disadvantaged because a majority of them lack basic security and access to adequate health services and have lost access to productive assets. Without the means to earn income during the lockdown, many are unable to feed themselves and their families. For most, no income means no food, or, at best, less food and less nutritious food.

Today, an estimated 79.5 million people – more than 1% of the world's population – have been internally displaced around the world. Nearly 90% of the world’s refugees remain in developed countries that already fail to afford social care, let alone fight a global pandemic. According to the International Rescue Committee (IRC), up to 1 billion COVID-19 infections and 3.2 million deaths may have resulted in 34 conflict-affected and vulnerable countries. Refugees face enormous obstacles that make certain populations more vulnerable to infectious diseases. Each day refugees and asylum seekers battle to receive the bare minimum required to stay alive and now face a crisis that has never been witnessed before.
The coronavirus is attacking our societies to its core.

**Key Issues**

1. Health and economic impacts of the virus are being borne disproportionately by vulnerable populations
2. Health concerns expressed by people, such as mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression, stress, obsessive compulsive disorder, etc.), excessive drinking, migraine, fatigue, and others
3. Rise in domestic violence cases in homes
4. Harassing and blaming people from certain countries, race, or religion as responsible for the Coronavirus disease
5. Difficulties in distance learning

(There are several other issues surrounding the topic that delegates will have to submit during moderated caucus session)

**Examples from around the world**

**Yemen**

As the civilian population of Yemen is still suffering from a major human-made humanitarian crisis, the Covid-19 crisis has brought a new burden to the health care infrastructure that has already been devastated by the conflict. Under-resourced and buffeted by years of dispute, it is insufficiently equipped to handle Covid-19 patients and to control the dissemination of the virus. However, the pandemic was just one of the many health problems of Yemenis.

Prior to Covid-19, several other significant outbreaks of disease, including cholera, diphtheria, measles and dengue fever, were reported in Yemen. Cholera alone has infected almost every Yemeni family in some way, with almost two million cases suspected since 2016. Even so, more than half of Yemen's health institutions are closed or partly operating. Since 2015, not only medical services but also medical staff have been attacked by the parties to the dispute.

**India**

Like in many other countries across the world, India's prolonged coronavirus lockdown has proved to be especially difficult for victims of domestic abuse. On 18 April, Tara - whose name has been changed on request - went online to search for helplines for survivors of domestic violence.

It was a little more than three weeks into India’s lockdown, which began on 25 March.
Her husband of 15 years had always been abusive - verbally, emotionally and, at times, even physically. But she had her job, which kept her out of the house for most of the day, and her husband often travelled for work, which kept him away.

The lockdown, however, changed everything.

“I live in a constant state of fear - of what could affect my husband’s mood,” she told me, speaking over the phone in a low voice after locking herself up in a room so her husband and mother-in-law wouldn’t hear her.

According to India’s national family health survey - an exhaustive household government survey - from 2015-16, around 33% of women have experienced spousal violence - physical, sexual or emotional.

It adds that just 14% of women who experienced violence have sought help to stop it.

The National Commission for Women has seen a spike in the complaints it receives, its chairperson, Rekha Sharma, told the BBC.

Between 23 March and 16 April 2020 - roughly the first three weeks of the lockdown - the commission received 239 complaints of domestic violence. This was a significant jump from the 123 complaints it received in the month leading up to the lockdown.

**United Kingdom**

According to a recent National Union of Students survey of more than 4,000 university students in the UK, 27% said they were unable to access online learning during lockdown and 18% said they lacked the support necessary to deal with the pandemic.

Disability Rights UK said its disabled student helpline had received hundreds of calls from people across the UK who said slides, reading lists and handouts were not always made available in advance of teaching sessions.

Students with autism spectrum disorder and mental health impairments had also reported concerns with online conferencing, including the "high degree of multi-tasking involved", such as the simultaneous use of video, audio and whiteboard.

There had also been "varying success" depending on microphone quality, accents and bandwidth, particularly for deaf students.

With students with disabilities feeling like being an “absolute after thought”, their education has been severely disturbed.
Japan

The number of suicides rose in Japan in August due to more women and school-aged children taking their own lives -- offering a first glimpse into the consequences of the mental health strain brought about by Covid-19 around the globe.

The island nation is one of the few major economies that releases timely suicide data as a constant social problem. The numbers suggest what may be going on around the world as countries grapple with the consequences of mass unemployment and social isolation that have more than the rest of the population.

Sociologists have long warned that the economic and social disruption wrought by measures to contain the coronavirus could cause more deaths than the pathogen itself. In Japan, the suicide rate has been falling but it remains a top cause of premature deaths -- this year, suicide has taken over 13,000 lives, while total Covid-19 fatalities number less than 2,000.

According to government statistics, the number of suicides in August increased by 15.4% to 1,854. Although a smaller proportion of suicides, the number of women taking their own lives jumped by around 40%. The number of suicides of students in elementary to high school more than doubled to 59 from the same period last year.

Africa

From 2016 to 2018, Africa imported about 85% of its food from outside the continent, leading to an annual food import bill of $35 billion, which is forecast to reach $110 billion by 2025. This heavy reliance on world markets is detrimental to food security, especially at a time of acute crisis. A situation exacerbated by the current COVID-19 crisis through its direct impacts on trade, logistics, production and value chains. In several African countries, the disruption of marketing and trade activities, and COVID-19-related panic-buying, exacerbated food price increases between March and June.

National policy responses to limit the impact of COVID-19 on food markets in Africa have varied, from the removal of value-added taxes on food products to export restrictions on key food items. For example, on 26 March, Kenya reduced the value-added tax on all goods from 16% to 14%. Sudan introduced a ban on sorghum exports on 15 April to ensure domestic availability. Export restriction policies and hoarding short-circuit trade and distribution, thus exacerbating the risks of food insecurity, especially for the continent’s most vulnerable populations.

Administrative restrictions imposed by governments, such as lockdowns, travel restrictions and physical distancing measures have also worsened the risk of food insecurity. These restrictions are being felt particularly strongly by low-income households and those working in the informal economy, due to their loss of livelihoods and inability to access markets.
In Africa, recent estimates suggest that 73 million people are acutely food insecure. Furthermore, since last year, African regions, particularly the Sahel and southern Africa, have been severely affected by climate change. And the unprecedented locust outbreak in the Horn of Africa put additional pressure on regional food systems. The region is particularly at risk, given the prevalence of conflict and political instability. A regional slump in food production and a fall in global demand may prolong the negative trade effects of COVID-19, with poverty and food insecurity expected to continue to rise in 2021.

Reference List

Assessing the rise of institutionalized marginalization of vulnerable groups with special emphasis on indigenous peoples.

Overview

Institutionalized Racism - Institutionalized racism is a form of racism which is structured into political and social institutions. It occurs when institutions, including corporations, governments and universities, discriminate either deliberately or indirectly, against certain groups of people to limit their rights.

Throughout the recent years there has been a clear incline in institutional racism against minorities and indigenous individuals. Minorities in countries have been marginalized and persecuted for their ethnicity and beliefs. The year 2020 has highlighted the rise of inequality and injustice in many developed nations. Moreover, issues such as the global deterioration of democracy have been identified as a posing threat to the human rights of minorities and vulnerable groups in many western African countries.

Global democracy is going through a "disturbing" decay over the world as a developing number of nations move towards authoritarian rule. The US association's yearly "Freedom in the World" report discovered 2018 was the thirteenth continuous year of crumbling democracy around the world. A sum of 68 nations endured a decrease in political rights and common freedoms during the previous year, with just 50 nations enrolling any advancement in these territories. “More authoritarian powers are now banning opposition groups or jailing their leaders, dispensing with term limits, and tightening the screws on any independent media that remain”.

Ethnic cleansing, the systematic endeavor to make ethnically homogeneous geographic zones through the extradition or persuasive dislodging of people having a place with specific ethnic gatherings. Ethnic cleansing now and again includes the evacuation of all actual remnants of the focused on bunch through the devastation of landmarks, graveyards, and places of love.

Examples from around the World

Native Americans (U.S.A & Canada)

Historically, the racial segregation of Indigenous peoples in Canada has been enforced by the Indian Act, reserve system, residential schools, and Indian hospitals, among other programs. These policies interfered with the social, economic, cultural and political systems of Indigenous peoples, while also paving the way for European settlement across the country. The segregation of Indigenous peoples in Canada must be understood within the history of contact, doctrines of discovery and conquest, and ongoing settler colonization.

Native Americans have experienced worse health outcomes than whites since Europeans first arrived in the Americas more than 500 years ago. Centuries of massive trauma, genocide, forced migration, segregation, and discrimination have been important causes of Native Americans-
white health disparities, as well as poor health outcomes for generations of Native Americans. However, because of sampling difficulties, Native Americans' modern experiences of discrimination and harassment remain understudied in health services research. In order to build evidence for appropriate policies and programs that address these problems and improve related health outcomes, it is critical to examine and document present-day experiences of discrimination of Native Americans across a broad spectrum of life domains.

Previous research suggests that these experiences have had massive and cumulative effects on the physical, emotional, and psychological health of Native American individuals and communities. Research also shows that experiences of discrimination and harassment (including disproportionate exposures to trauma and recurrent microaggressions) have severe negative consequences for Native Americans' health behaviors and related outcomes. Major issues experienced by Native Americans include high mortality rates, poor health, low-quality health care, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, depression, and sexual violence.

Prior research indicates that for some US minorities, socioeconomic status, geographic variation, and neighborhood conditions may moderate the relationships between race, discrimination, and health. For example, discrimination research suggests that for blacks and Latinos, higher income and education levels are associated with greater reported discrimination. However, it has not been thoroughly investigated whether these patterns would extend to Native Americans. Research also suggests that residential segregation impacts discriminatory experiences, with major consequences for racial/ethnic minorities' health, social mobility, and quality of life.

**Australia**

That Indigenous Australians occupy the continent's more remote spaces appears as something of a self-evident fact. In many ways this social and spatial disconnection has become an increasingly important explanation for the dramatic gaps in life-chances and disadvantages of Aboriginal Australians. Yet it also underlies common-sense understandings of Indigeneity where it is seen as intransigent and its problems self-inflicted as the result of not joining mainstream white culture and market-oriented ways of being. Such perspectives lags a knowledge of the real spatial distribution of Indigenous Australians across its inner regional and urban areas. Life, for the majority of the Australian Indigenous population is, in fact, urban, and the lived experience of socio-economic disparities is particularly acute between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in urban locations. Yet such proximity is not generally matched by daily social contact or the entwining of white and black institutional contexts. This separation of parallel lives extends to and shapes the actions, and inactions, of government and policy makers on Indigenous issues. This contention is supported by evidence of a decade of neglect, demonstrable underspending by State and Federal governments during a period of fiscal bounty and a continuation of truly remarkable gaps between the socio-economic outcomes of white and black Australians.

**The African Continent**

In Africa, indigenous people can be classified into two major groups, namely livestock pastoralists and hunter-gathers. Some communities also exist known as the blacksmithery and potters.
Since 1992, the indigenous people of Africa have entered the international arena to fight for their recognition, land, language, and culture. Recent years have not been easy for many indigenous activists, who have faced intimidation, arrests, and even death as they fought for the rights of their communities. The fight took Africa’s indigenous people to Geneva for the U.N. Working Group on Indigenous Populations, to New York for the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and to the African Commission of Human and People’s Rights.

The past decade has been full of challenges caused by conflict in the political arena, lack of food security, and globalization in particular the structural adjustment programs that are creating a global market economy that is leaving indigenous communities in a problematic situation.

In the past, it was illegal in Kenya to speak about the rights of indigenous people. It was also illegal to hold meetings, as they supposedly amounted to inciting people against the law of the country. These restrictions were a way of marginalizing the indigenous people by denying them knowledge of their rights. Meetings educated the people and the government knew that if the indigenous people knew their rights, they would claim those rights and expose the violations against them to the international society.

Today in Kenya and many other African states where indigenous people are found, there exist indigenous organizations registered by the governments and people are allowed to meet and express themselves to some extent. This change is a step forward. It is, however, important to know that obtaining the right to assembly and self-expression is also dependent on gaining political representation. Indigenous people must therefore continue fighting so that they can have political representatives from the grassroots level.

Reference List

Conference

Assessing the ongoing internal and inter-state humanitarian crises in the African Continent.

Overview

From time immemorial, Africa has experienced numerous forms of conflict, ranging from ethnic confrontations to interstate wars. In post-colonial Africa, the notion of war still plays a veritable role. The understanding of the situation in Africa has shown that most of these wars have been fought on African soil and have had devastating effects on the continent and the world as a whole. Examples of these wars include Rwanda, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast and just to name a few. These wars have greatly affected the African continent especially the countries involved as it has reduced the economies of these countries to nothing but a shadow on their own. It is obvious that most of these wars are taking place but in the developing countries and therefore leaves one with the question, whether the wars can be seen as a consequence of poverty or is poverty the consequence of war?

The economic record since 1970 has been considerably poorer for the majority of African nations than in the 1960s. Their problems have now escalated, with a few exceptions, to a point where much more than just an economic crisis between these nations can be recorded.

The current African crisis, marked by economic stagnation, political regression and social unrest, presents fundamental challenges not only to indigenous regimes and developmental theories, but also to non-continental players especially Western countries and companies, plus foreign organisations.

In this context, the international community should pursue ways to prevent such wars from breaking out, particularly in developing countries.

Key Issues

Delegates are expected to have a detailed understanding of the conflicts in the following countries and its consequences on the socio-economic climate of the continent:

1. Ethiopia
2. Nigeria
3. Sudan
4. Somalia
5. Yemen
Ethiopia

Ethiopia’s federal government has declared war on its northern region of Tigray, leading to fears of a protracted conflict in Africa’s second-most populous country.

The Tigray region is one of 10 semi-autonomous federal states organised along ethnic lines in Ethiopia, and home mostly to the Tigrayan people who make up about 6 percent of Ethiopia’s population of more than 110 million.

In 1975, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) launched a protracted war against the Derg military government in Addis Ababa, which they eventually toppled in 1991. The TPLF then dominated the ruling alliance composed of four ethno-regional parties, until Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a member of the Oromo ethnic group, came to power in 2018.

Tigray’s battle-hardened, powerful military also took the lead in Ethiopia’s war against neighbouring Eritrea that raged from 1998 to 2000 over disputed border territory. The war was only declared officially over in 2018 in a peacemaking effort by Abiy, which won him the Nobel Peace Prize.

Under Abiy, Tigray’s leaders have complained of being unfairly targeted in corruption prosecutions, removed from top positions and broadly scapegoated for the country’s woes. A year ago, the TPLF withdrew from the ruling coalition after Abiy merged it into the nationwide Prosperity Party. The feud became more intense after Tigray held its own elections in September, defying Abiy’s government which postponed national polls due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Addis Ababa ruled the Tigray government was unlawful and, in return, Tigray said it no longer recognised Abiy’s administration.

However, things moved fast, with Abiy claiming air raids have already been carried out on Tigray military assets and promising more. Casualties have been reported on both sides but with communications still out, it is difficult to verify either side’s account of events on the ground.

Given Tigray has a powerful military, with an estimated 250,000 troops, a war could be lengthy and bloody, which could be detrimental to the population.
Nigeria

Special Anti-Robbery Squad, popularly known as SARS is a unit of the Nigerian Police Force charged with the primary function of performing undercover operations against crimes associated with armed robbery, car theft, kidnapping, and crimes associated with firearms. The Unit was established in 1992 and following its creation, the group has, on several occasions, been accused of a number of human rights violations which include:

1. Illegal stop and search
2. Illegal arrests and detentions
3. Extrajudicial killings
4. Sexual harassment of women
5. Brutalising young Nigerians

Across Nigeria, SARS officers have turned their responsibility to protect Nigerians into an incentive to extort and loot money, property and other valuables belonging to offenders and their families. Since 2016, Amnesty International has reported 15 incidents in which SARS officers have illegally seized the property of offenders.

Young people between the ages of 17 and 30 are more likely to be arrested, tortured or extorted by SARS. These young men are also illegally detained in raids on television watching areas, bars and leisure facilities. They are being held in jail and forced to pay massive bribes in order to secure their release. Many that are unable to pay are subjected to torture or other ill-treatment.

Research by Amnesty International reveals that no SARS officer has been found responsible for human rights abuses reported in this article. The group wrote to the Inspector General of Police on three occasions urging the police to take measures to prosecute the cases described in the report, but there was no response.

Many victims of SARS breaches face challenges and in some cases, organized resistance from the police when pursuing justice, including threats to their lives.

Sudan

The situation in South Sudan is a dynamic and extended humanitarian crisis arising from years of civil conflict, repeated natural disasters and a severe economic crisis. Civilians face the brunt of the violence and have systematically been attacked by the warring sides. People have lost their homes and livelihoods, and the social infrastructure has been seriously damaged.

- The country's projected population of 11.7 million inhabitants, approximately 7.5 million of which are in need of humanitarian aid and security in 2020.
- An estimated 6.7 million people will need food and livelihood assistance in 2020.
- Almost 4 million people are internally affected by the refugee situation of 1.5 million and some 2.3 million in six neighboring countries.
- Spontaneous refugees return the scarce services already available in host populations. The war is reported to have resulted in almost 400,000 excess deaths in the population of South Sudan between the end of 2013 and 2018, with about half of the lives lost due to violence.

Threats to people in need include multiple types of violence, including domestic and conflict-related sexual violence, forced migration, starvation or extreme food shortages and malnutrition, as well as illness, epidemics and traumatic stress. Other security issues impacting the civilian populace include explosives and explosive remains of war, mainly clustered in Equatoria, and crime fuelled by problems resulting from the fragile economy and changing inflation over time. Even if armed war has come to an end in 2019, crime, intercommunal warfare and general instability remain the key challenge to the lives, dignity and health of millions of citizens and have a significant effect on freedom of movement and residence. Abductions and extrajudicial executions, illegal detention and arrests, as well as looting and loss of civilian property are some of the threats facing residents in South Sudan.

As mentioned above, conflict in close relationships and sexual harassment and assault are both major challenges. Almost 20,000 children are known to have been used as child soldiers and 16,000 unmarried, scattered or lost children have been registered.

Somalia

Somalia’s humanitarian crisis is one of the longest and most complex in the world. The country is experiencing both armed conflict and worsening climate shocks across different regions, a dangerous combination that has resulted in massive displacements both within and across Somalia.

Somalia has seen persistent instability and conflict since 1991. More than 5 million Somalis (over 40 percent of the population) need some form of humanitarian assistance; over 1 million face crisis levels of food insecurity. Conflict has driven 740,000 Somalis to nearby countries and a further 2.6 million people are displaced within the country. Flooding at the end of 2019 could push these numbers to record levels.
Various factors in Somalia’s crisis are forcing people to move to urban areas to seek humanitarian assistance. Many urban migrants live in camps or informal settlements and have limited access to information about their rights and services. Families set up shelters wherever they can, putting them at risk of violence, exploitation, abuse and disease.

The need for space, food, water and shelter places a strain on urban resources. The capacity of host communities with limited systems in place is then extended, leading to forced evictions and extreme vulnerability among displaced populations.

In late 2020 or early 2021, Somalia hopes to hold its first direct parliamentary and presidential elections since 1969, suggesting the political situation is stabilizing somewhat. Nonetheless, militant groups represent a persistent domestic threat, and elections could trigger renewed conflict rather than bring peace, thereby increasing risk to humanitarian workers. Anticipated flooding could worsen food insecurity at least until the spring of 2020.

Yemen

Yemen, situated in western Asia at the southern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, remains the world’s greatest humanitarian disaster. Five years of war have caused more than 3.6 million refugees to leave their homes and about 80% of the population 24 million people are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.

Since fighting broke out at the end of March 2015, conditions in Yemen, already one of the poorest countries in the Middle East have worsened rapidly. Extreme food shortages, clean water, hygiene and health services, as well as deadly major cholera and diphtheria outbreaks, have resulted in a serious effect on human life and impoverished families of basic needs. At least 70% of the population needs access to food, drinking water and adequate health services, and almost one million suspected cases of cholera in 2018.

In addition to the Covid-19 crisis, conflict, drought and pervasive hunger, Yemen is also facing difficulties in obtaining much needed fuel due to the blockade enforced by the coalition in the north of the country. The recession makes trips to the city more costly, and not all parents can afford a cab to drive their sick children to the hospital. Entry to water of some kind, whether it’s drinkable or not, presents another regular obstacle for families in a situation where education has become a reality.
Reference List