



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

70th SESSION ISSUES BOOK

ADDRESSING POVERTY

TERRORISM

PGA'S SPECIAL SESSION



MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST



MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF THE FAR WEST

70TH ANNUAL SESSION

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The General Assembly is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and was established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations. The Assembly consists of all UN Member States and may discuss any questions or matters within the scope of the Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organ provided for in the Charter. It may make recommendations to UN members or the Security Council or both on any such questions or matters, except disputes or situations in respect of which the Security Council is currently exercising its functions.

(UN Handbook, 2017-18)

At Model United Nations of the Far West, the General Assembly considers two agenda items and also engages in a Special Session whose theme is determined by the President of the General Assembly. The title of this session is introduced in the weeks leading up to conference and tests delegates' ability to work on the basis of consensus. In addition to drafting and voting on its own resolutions, the General Assembly votes to approve the outcome documents of its subcommittees at the Closing Plenary Session on the final day of conference.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ISSUES BOOK WAS PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF
WHITTIER COLLEGE FOR THE 70TH SESSION OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS OF
THE FAR WEST



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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ISSUES BOOK

1. Addressing Poverty
2. Terrorism

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ADDRESSING POVERTY

Piper Lowinger, Whittier College
MUNFW 70th Session – General Assembly

In June of 1998, the United Nations released a statement defining "poverty" in terms of the economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental consequences borne by millions of people. The statement reads as follows: "Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and cloth[e] a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households, and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation."¹

The many components of this definition, now identified by the term "multidimensional poverty," have become the focus of study for several United Nations agencies and other aid organizations. According to a 2019 study conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 101 countries, including 31 low-income, 68 middle-income and 2 high-income, a collective 1.3 billion people qualify as being "multidimensionally poor."² Low income levels, limited access to health care and education, and pressures that restrict political freedoms are among the indicators that expose the ways in which poverty undermines human rights. Of the 1.3 billion, 780 million people live below the agreed international poverty line of \$1.90USD per day. Poverty disproportionately affects women and children: on average, there are 122 women aged 25 to 34 living in poverty for every 100 men of the same age group, and more than 160 million children are in jeopardy of living in extreme poverty beyond 2030.³

Poverty is of global concern not only because of its oppressive nature in regard to human rights, but also because it relates to a host of internationally sensitive and interconnected issues. On 1 January

¹United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Press Release ECOSOC/5759: Statement of Commitment for Action to Eradicate Poverty Adopted by Administrative Committee on Coordination*, 20 May 1998.

²United Nations Development Programme. (2019) Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019: Illuminating Inequalities.

³United Nations. Ending Poverty.

2016, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development came into effect with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a guide for action. In furthering the Millennium Development Goals' objectives, the SDGs call on all countries to share the international responsibility of eradicating poverty, reforming systems that create social inequalities, and mitigating climate change and environmental degradation.⁴ The phenomenon of globalization emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of countries and world systems. The SDGs offer a practical roadmap for globalized action in an internationally integrated environment. Poverty is a common thread that weaves through the fabric of the SDGs. For example, goals pertaining to hunger, health, education, gender inequality, sanitation, economic growth, and clean energy cannot be achieved without first addressing and alleviating poverty.⁵

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL ONE

In recognition of poverty's influence in exacerbating other issues outlined in the 2030 Agenda, the first of the 17 goals calls for an end to poverty in all its forms. The following seven targets offer a framework for the realization of "no poverty":

- 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day;
- 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions;
- 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable;
- 1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance;
- 1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters;
- 1.A Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and

⁴World Bank. (2018). Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 : Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle.

⁵Bradshaw, J. (2011). Poverty. In Walker A., Sinfield A., & Walker C. (Eds.), *Fighting poverty, inequality and injustice: A manifesto inspired by Peter Townsend* (pp. 91-110). Bristol, UK; Portland, OR, USA: Bristol University Press.

- predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions:
- 1.B Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions.⁶

GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF POVERTY

Approximately 70 percent of the world's extreme poor are located in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa; in the latter, 42 percent of the population is below the poverty threshold. Though the global poverty rate has been halved since 2000, efforts to relieve the 11 percent of the world's population living below the extreme poverty line must continue.

Of the world's 780 million extreme poor, approximately 70 percent live in 5 countries (listed in descending order of extreme poor population): India, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh. These countries are also among the most populous in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for 85 percent of the world's poor. A majority of the 43 countries with poverty rates above 18 percent are located in sub-Saharan Africa.⁷ According to the World Bank, three-fourths of sub-Saharan countries reported poverty rates above 18 percent in 2015, and, of the world's 28 poorest countries, 27 are sub-Saharan with poverty rates above 30 percent.⁸ In 11 sub-Saharan countries, more than half of the population lives in extreme poverty.

Approximately 63 million people live in extreme poverty in countries across Latin America, namely Bolivia, Columbia, and Venezuela.⁹ Although extreme poverty is comparatively lower in the Middle East and North Africa, the average poverty rate doubled between 2013 and 2015, reaching five percent and representing 18.6 million people.¹⁰

A 2018 study conducted by the Brookings Institute quantified multidimensionally poor populations in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia in terms of consumption and wealth, education for children and adults, and lack of access to basic infrastructure services including drinking water,

⁶United Nations. (2015.) Sustainable Development Goal One.

⁷United Nations. Ending Poverty.

⁸ World Bank. (2018). Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 : Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle.

⁹World Bank. (2018). Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 : Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle.

¹⁰United Nations Development Programme. (2019) Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019: Illuminating Inequalities.

sanitation, and electricity. Of the identified 64.4 million multidimensionally poor in sub-Saharan Africa, nearly half experience compounding deprivations in all three categories.¹¹ Considerable deprivation in both access to basic infrastructure and education affects approximately 26 percent of the studied population.¹² An additional 19 percent of the sub-Saharan population faces extreme poverty related to inadequate wealth and access to basic infrastructure.¹³ The study found that 26.5 million individuals constitute the South Asian multidimensionally poor, less than half of the studied population in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁴ Approximately 40 percent of that population has inadequate access to basic infrastructure and education, followed by one quarter of the population affected by deprivations in all three categories.¹⁵

Efforts to alleviate extreme poverty have been most successful in East Asia, particularly in China due to the country's economic growth and expanding middle class.¹⁶ The countries in this region reported an average poverty rate of three percent in 2015, down from 62 percent in 1990.¹⁷ South Asia also achieved significant poverty reduction: its critically poor population halved from half a billion people between 1990 and 2015. In South America, extreme poverty rates consistently hover near 10 percent and are projected to maintain that level.¹⁸ Comparatively, extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa continues to increase annually. Global extreme poverty is increasingly becoming a sub-Saharan phenomenon. The expansion of destitute populations in sub-Saharan regions can be attributed to the consequences of extractive industries, low income levels, weak social protection and assistance systems, the prevalence of inter and intrastate conflict, and climate effects.

SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS

Expanding social protection programs for the poor and most vulnerable is a key element of the United Nations' strategy to reduce poverty. Social protection programmes include social assistance,

¹¹Patel, N. (2018) Figure of the week: Understanding poverty in Africa. The Brookings Institution.

¹²Patel, N. (2018) Figure of the week: Understanding poverty in Africa. The Brookings Institution.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General: Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)*, 24 July 2013, A/68/183.

¹⁷Patel, N. (2018) Figure of the week: Understanding poverty in Africa. The Brookings Institution.

¹⁸World Bank. (2018). *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle*.

such as cash transfers; targeted food assistance, particularly for primary schools; and social insurance and labor market programs, including old-age pensions, disability pensions, unemployment insurance, skills training, and wage subsidies.¹⁹ These systems are fundamental to preventing poverty and inequality in every stage of life. In 2016, preliminary data revealed that 45 percent of the world's population was effectively protected by a social protection system and 68 percent of retirement aged persons received pensions.²⁰ However, the distribution of coverage and pension provisions varied widely among countries and regions. Similar worldwide studies revealed that in 2016, 28 percent of persons with severe disabilities collected disability benefits, 22 percent of unemployed individuals worldwide received unemployment benefits, and 41 percent of women with newborns received maternity benefits.²¹ Low-income countries have an acute need for an extension of these programmes to their vulnerable populations, as, on average, only one in five people receive some benefit from social protection systems.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Strengthening disaster risk reduction capabilities is also an important strategy for reducing poverty and creating a conducive environment for sustainable development. The risk of disaster is greater in low-income countries with weak governing institutions, as risk reduction capacities are often overwhelmed by rapid economic growth and increased exposure to natural hazards.²² Large-scale natural disasters that share a correlation with climate change-related phenomena are becoming more frequent, including the recent climate-related droughts in Mozambique and catastrophic hurricanes in the Caribbean Sea. The annual average of economic losses from large-scale disasters amounts to \$520 billion in damages to schools, housing, health-care facilities, and agricultural production.²³

¹⁹United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General: Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)*, 24 July 2013, A/68/183.

²⁰United Nations. (2019). Progress of Goal One in 2019. Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform.

²¹United Nations. (2019). Progress of Goal One in 2019. Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform.

²²United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General: Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)*, 24 July 2013, A/68/183.

²³Schwartz, E. (2018). Quick facts: How climate change affects people living in poverty. Mercy Corps.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly following the 2015 Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. This non-binding agreement recognizes that the individual State is primarily responsible for reducing disaster risk; however, in the spirit of globalization and burden sharing, it is encouraged that that responsibility be divided among other stakeholders, such as local government and the private sector.²⁴ As of March of 2019, 67 countries have recorded progress in alignment with the Sendai Framework, and 24 countries reported that their respective local governments had developed strategies consistent with national standards.²⁵ The Sendai Framework aims to accomplish the following seven global targets by 2030:

1. Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower the average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015;
2. Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020 -2030 compared to the period 2005-2015;
3. Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030;
4. Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030;
5. Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020;
6. Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of this Framework by 2030;
7. Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030.²⁶

Central to the Sendai Framework are the Four Priorities For Action. The first priority emphasizes the importance of understanding disaster risk in its numerous dimensions, including vulnerability, prevention and reaction capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazardous characteristics, and environmental change. Increased knowledge of disaster risk is essential in strengthening national risk

²⁴United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 18 March 2015.

²⁵United Nations. (2019). Progress of Goal One in 2019. Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform.

²⁶ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 18 March 2015.

assessment, prevention, mitigation, and preparation and response programs and initiatives.²⁷ Improving disaster risk governance and management at the local, regional, and national levels marks the second of the four priorities, as increased collaboration and communication across governments enhance disaster-related operations. According to the third priority, public and private investment in disaster risk reduction for economic, social, health, cultural, and environmental resilience is crucial to prevent and reduce the impact of disasters on individuals, communities, national assets, and the environment. The fourth priority calls upon nations to enhance "disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'Build Back Better' in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction." Climate affected regions are encouraged to integrate disaster risk reduction techniques into structural development standards for housing, road and rail networks, industrial plants, and water supply systems in order to reduce structural vulnerability and normalize stable structural integrity to resist the effects of floods, droughts, storms, and other forms of extreme weather.²⁸

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUBSISTENCE FARMING IN DEVELOPING REGIONS

As climate events worsen, agricultural industries of several developing countries wither under intense heat waves and prolonged droughts. Droughts alone have affected more than one billion people in the last decade, as subsistence farming is the primary source of food and income for, on average, three out of four people in developing countries.²⁹ A 2017 World Bank Report reveals that droughts have decimated produce stocks that could have fed approximately 81 million people daily since 2001.³⁰

With climate change threatening the livelihood and well being of destitute populations, national governments add insult to injury by flooding markets with hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizers produced by industrial agriculture corporations, for example Monsanto and Adler Seeds.³¹ Many subsistence farmers are legally forced to abandon local seed varieties that are drought resistant, do not require chemical fertilizer, and can be reseeded year after year. Hybridized seeds cannot be replanted

²⁷United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, 18 March 2015.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Schwartz, E. (2018). Quick facts: How climate change affects people living in poverty, Mercy Corps.

³⁰World Bank. (2017). *Uncharted Waters: The New Economics of Water Scarcity and Variability*.

³¹Wise, T. A. (2019). *Eating tomorrow: Agribusiness, family farmers, and the battle for the future of food*. New York: The New Press.

and require the use of chemical fertilizers, which over time decreases output and deteriorates soil health.³² Government imposition of new farming techniques, weak or nonexistent property rights, and climate change create critical living situations for millions of people in various regions of Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia, for example.³³ In the absence of sustainable agriculture and strong democratic institutions, poverty traps become all the more inescapable for many subsistence farmers.

SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH

Though Rwanda is not often considered a standout model of poverty reduction in the context of global poverty, there are many lessons to be learned from Rwanda's development. In the years since the genocide of 1994, Rwanda has transitioned from being the seventh poorest country to the twentieth in the 2015 global ranking. Its extreme poverty rate decreased by 12 percent between 2005 and 2010, and in 2017 it recorded a low of 38 percent. Sustainable farming techniques, an increase in non-farm related labor opportunities, the emergence of small-scale entrepreneurs, and international collaboration have been fundamental to Rwandan success.³⁴ Additionally, 64 percent of parliamentarians are women, compared to the global average of 22 percent.³⁵ Rwanda has been transformed through political commitment to honest governance, open market economics, and female representation.

Sustained economic growth has prompted countries with high poverty rates, such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, and Nigeria, to transition from low-income to middle-income status. A significant proportion of these countries' populations facing extreme poverty have moved into the lower-middle and middle-income population demographic.³⁶ As countries develop economically and more labor opportunities become available to the extreme poor, poverty rates tend to fall. The average poverty rate in low-income countries has reached 14 percent, down from 42 percent prior to national

³²Litchfield, J., McCulloch, N., & Winters, L. (2003). Agricultural Trade Liberalization and Poverty Dynamics in Three Developing Countries. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 85(5), 1285-1291.

³³Wise, T. A. (2019). *Eating tomorrow: Agribusiness, family farmers, and the battle for the future of food*. New York: The New Press.

³⁴Naftalin, M. (2011). Rwanda: A New Rwanda? *The World Today*, 67(7), 22-24.

³⁵Partick, A. (2019). Women in Government: Representation in Rwanda. The Borgen Project.

³⁶World Bank. (2018). Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 : Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle.

efforts to sustain economic growth.³⁷ Countries that have been unsuccessful in establishing systems to promote sustained growth, such as Afghanistan, Haiti, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Nepal, and several sub-Saharan countries, due to climate events, conflict, and corruption, highlight the need for international support and responsibility sharing.³⁸

Rwanda serves as an example of how, despite devastation from conflict and turmoil, there is hope for unity both internally and internationally. Rehabilitation is possible for a nation and its extreme poor. But in the words of Rwandan president Paul Kagame, "The only sustainable solution is one that includes us all."

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What specific strategies can States use to actualize the concepts of Sustainable Development Goal One?
2. What story do human rights tell in addressing poverty?
3. What role does globalization play in responsibility sharing in the context of global poverty?
4. What global systems widen the wealth gap between developing and developed countries? How can the international community mitigate the effects of those systems as a means of alleviating poverty?
5. What is the impact, if any, of poverty in your country?
6. What measures has your country taken to reduce poverty?

³⁷Paolo Figini, & Enrico Santarelli. (2006). Openness, Economic Reforms, and Poverty: Globalization in Developing Countries. *The Journal of Developing Areas*, 39(2), 129-151.

³⁸World Bank. (2018). Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 : Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle.

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TERRORISM

Grace Reeder, Whittier College
MUNFW 70th Session – General Assembly

The United Nations was founded in the aftermath of two world wars that devastated the global community. The central mission of the United Nations (UN) is to maintain international peace and security, as stated in Article 1 of the UN Charter. The Security Council is the primary organ responsible for maintaining peace and security and has taken numerous actions since its founding to uphold this commitment. Article 39 of the UN Charter states that the Security Council is the main body that can "determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken" (U.N. Charter art. 39). The General Assembly can also make recommendations on how to deal with these issues, and can take action if the Security Council fails to act.¹ However, threats to international peace and security have evolved since the United Nations was founded, which has meant that the response to these threats has changed as well.

Following the end of the Cold War, threats to international peace and security were increasingly comprised of intrastate conflicts rather than the interstate conflicts that the United Nations had been founded to prevent.² Thus, as the nature of global conflict changed, the UN's capacity to respond had to shift with it. The UN Charter was designed to deal with "international war, waged by well-organized states" (Roberts 1993). Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali released a report in 1992 entitled *An Agenda For Peace* which addressed the need for the UN to strengthen its capacity for dealing with the changing scope of conflict. Boutros-Ghali recognized the changing global context, as advancements in "communications and global commerce" have helped blur national boundaries.

¹ (2019). Peace and Security. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/peace-and-security/index.html>.

² Roberts, A. (1993). The United Nations and International Security. In Brown M. (Ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (pp. 207-236). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.whittier.edu/stable/j.ctv36zqgw.15>.

providing new dimensions of insecurity.³ He also acknowledged that "the sources of conflict are pervasive and deep" and that states are being threatened by "brutal ethnic, religious, social, cultural or linguistic strife" (Boutros-Ghali 1992). He continues by asserting that "social peace is challenged... by new assertions of discrimination and exclusion and... by acts of terrorism seeking to undermine evolution and change through democratic means" (Boutros-Ghali).

The 1990s marked the first time the United Nations began to pay serious attention to the growing threat that terrorism posed to international peace and security. Due to the changing global landscape that was acknowledged by Boutros-Ghali, globalization has allowed for the increased mobility of people across borders, allowing for terrorists to move both money and weapons with ease.⁴ Thus, during the 1990s, terrorist attacks became much more frequent and bloody. Prior to the 1990s, the General Assembly (GA) was the main body within the UN system that discussed the threat of terrorism. The main goal was for cooperation among Member States in developing an international legal framework for responding to terrorism. The GA has been discussing terrorism as a threat to international security since 1972 and has passed several resolutions dedicated to addressing this topic.

The United Nations and its agencies have devised nineteen different international legal instruments since 1963 that are focused on counter-terrorism measures. Thirteen of these were developed between 1963 and 2004 and are "open to participation by all Member States."⁵ In 1973, the GA adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents. This is an important legal instrument in combatting terrorism and calls on states to develop measures to criminalize such acts. In 1979, they adopted the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages. In 1980, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material was adopted, which criminalized the "unlawful possession, use, transfer, or theft of nuclear material" (Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee 2019). In 1988, two instruments were adopted regarding maritime navigation: the Convention for the Suppression of

³ Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992). An agenda for peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peace-keeping : report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the summit meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992. New York: United Nations.

⁴ Fasulo, L. (2004). Coordinating to Fight International Terrorism. In *An Insider's Guide to the UN* (pp. 79-89). New Haven: London: Yale University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.whittier.edu/stable/j.ctt1npxsz.13>.

⁵ Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee. (2019). International Legal Instruments. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/resources/international-legal-instruments/>.

Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation; and the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf. These are some of the international legal instruments that were developed by the UN prior to the 1990s to combat terrorism.

Seven of the nineteen legal instruments deal with civil aviation: the 1963 Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed On Board Aircraft; the 1970 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft; the 1971 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation; the 1988 Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation, supplementary to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation; the 2010 Convention on the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Relating to International Civil Aviation; the 2010 Protocol Supplementary to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft; and the 2014 Protocol to Amend the Convention on Offences and Certain Acts Committed on Board Aircraft. It is interesting to note that four of these seven legal instruments were adopted prior to 9/11.

During the 1990s, increased attention was given to the threat of terrorism. Several of the nineteen legal instruments were adopted during this decade; this was also when the Security Council began to pass resolutions regarding acts of terrorism. The 1991 Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection remains the sole international legal instrument dedicated to explosive materials. The 1997 International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings "creates a regime of universal jurisdiction over the unlawful and intentional use of explosives" with intent to cause harm.⁶ The 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism is a very important mechanism that requires States party to this convention to criminalize those who help finance terrorism, as well as take steps to prevent and counteract the financing of terrorist activities. Additionally, this Convention allows for States to identify, freeze, and seize funds that have been allocated for terrorist acts.

⁶ Ibid.

In 2005, a series of instruments were either adopted or expanded upon. These include: the 2005 Amendments to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material; the 2005 Protocol to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation; the 2005 Protocol to the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Fixed Platforms located on the Continental Shelf; and the 2005 International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. These nineteen documents are important instruments in the international effort to combat terrorism. Additionally, the General Assembly established an ad hoc committee in 1996 that established "an international convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings and, subsequently, an international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism, to supplement related existing international instruments, and thereafter to address means of further developing a comprehensive legal framework of conventions dealing with international terrorism."⁷ The committee continues to be renewed annually by the General Assembly and has issued reports since 1997.

It is important to note that prior to the attacks against the United States that took place on September 11th, 2001, twelve of the nineteen instruments had already been adopted. However, the rate of adherence to these tools was incredibly low. It steadily increased following the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001), as this resolution specifically calls on Member States to adopt or ratify these counter-terrorism measures. Following Resolution 1373, all countries have either signed or adopted at least one of these nineteen instruments, and two-thirds of Member States have ratified ten of the nineteen (Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee 2019). This corresponds to the increased attention paid to the issue of terrorism by the United Nations that took place following 9/11. However, despite the extensive set of instruments used to combat acts of terrorism, the UN and its Member States have yet to agree upon a universal definition for terrorism.

⁷ (2018, November 21). Ad Hoc Committee established by General Assembly resolution 51/210 of 17 December 1996. Retrieved from <http://legal.un.org/committees/terrorism/>.

SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

The first time that the Security Council passed a resolution dealing with terrorism was in 1989, when it unanimously adopted Resolution 635 on the issue of plastic or sheet explosives.⁸ Resolution 635 stated it was "mindful of the important role of the United Nations in supporting and encouraging efforts by all States and intergovernmental organizations in preventing and eliminating all acts of terrorism, including those involving the use of explosives."⁹ Thus, this resolution essentially established the United Nations, and more specifically, the Security Council, as the international body responsible for dealing with terrorism. Security Council Resolution 1189 was adopted unanimously in August 1998, following the truck bombings at U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, on August 7th. The Resolution strongly condemned "such acts which have a damaging effect on international relations and jeopardize the security of States," as well as demonstrating the UN's commitment to "eliminate international terrorism."¹⁰ Security Council Resolution 1269 was adopted unanimously in October 1999 and condemns "all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal and unjustified" and calls upon Member States to work cooperatively to effectively combat acts of terrorism.¹¹ There were a number of actions taken to condemn the threat of terrorism by the United Nations and its entities, but it wasn't until the aftermath of 9/11 that the UN became more assertive in addressing the threat terrorism posed to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Within twenty-four hours of the 9/11 attacks, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1368 condemning the attacks against the United States and stating its determination "to combat by all means threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts."¹² Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, it recognized the "inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in accordance with the Charter," specifically Article 51 (S/RES/1269). This was later used

⁸ Kramer, H., & Yetiv, S. (2007). The UN Security Council's Response to Terrorism: Before and after September 11, 2001. *Political Science Quarterly*, 122(3), 409-432. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.whittier.edu/stable/20202886>.

⁹ Security Council resolution 635, Marking of explosives, S/RES 635 (1989) (14 June 1989), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/635>.

¹⁰ Security Council resolution 1189, The international terrorism, S/RES 1189 (1998) (13 August 1998), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1189>.

¹¹ Security Council resolution 1269, The responsibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, S/RES/1269 (1999) (19 October 1999), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1269>.

¹² Security Council resolution 1368, Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, S/RES/1368 (2001) (12 September 2001), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1368>.

by the United States to legally justify its invasion of Iraq, although that argument was dismissed by the Security Council. Almost three weeks later, on 28 September, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1373 which imposed for the first time binding commitments on all (then)191 Member States.

Resolution 1373 "placed barriers on the movement, organisation and fund-raising activities of terrorist groups and imposed legislative, policy and reporting requirements on member states to assist the global struggle against terrorism."¹³ Additionally, this resolution established a monitoring mechanism through the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). This committee has three main purposes: first, to strengthen the capacity of Member States to combat terrorism; second, "to facilitate the delivery of technical assistance to states trying to carry out counter-terrorism mandates" of Member States; and third, to coordinate "the counter-terrorism efforts of international, regional, and subregional organizations."¹⁴ Resolution 1566 (2004) provides perhaps the closest definition for terrorism by the Security Council thus far. Resolution 1566 "mandated states to extradite, deny asylum or try perpetrators of acts of terrorism and their supporters."¹⁵ This resolution also created a fund dedicated to compensating victims of terrorism. Most notable, however, is what can be found in operative paragraph three of the resolution, where it states:

that criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature, and calls upon all States to prevent such acts and, if not prevented, to ensure that such acts are punished by penalties consistent with their grave nature.¹⁶

¹³ (2019). UN Documents for Terrorism: Security Council Resolutions. Retrieved from https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-resolutions/page/4?type=Terrorism&cbtype-terrorism#038:cbtype-terrorism.

¹⁴ Kramer, H., & Yetiv, S. (2007). The UN Security Council's Response to Terrorism: Before and after September 11, 2001. *Political Science Quarterly*, 122(3), 409-432. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.whittier.edu/stable/20202886>.

¹⁵ Ochieng, M. (2017). The Elusive Legal Definition of Terrorism at the United Nations: An Inhibition to the Criminal Justice Paradigm at the State Level. *Strathmore Law Journal*, 3, 65-88.

¹⁶ Security Council resolution 1566, Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, S/RES/1566 (2004) (8 October 2004), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1566>.

This is the closest to a definition of terrorism that the UN has been able to provide. However, subsequent resolutions fail to incorporate this definition. For example, Resolution 2178, unanimously adopted in 2014, requires that Member States respond to the threat of foreign terrorist fighters stating that, "all States shall ensure that their domestic laws and regulations establish serious criminal offenses sufficient to provide the ability to prosecute and to penalize in a manner duly reflecting the seriousness of the offense."¹⁷ This resolution does not define what consists of an act of terrorism, and only loosely refers to "terrorism in all forms and manifestations." Thus, Member States have a wide level of freedom in both defining terrorism and abiding by the contents of Resolution 2178. Given that subsequent resolutions following Resolution 1566 (2004), including Resolution 2178 (2014), fail to incorporate the definition of terrorism provided by operative clause three in Resolution 1566, it cannot be categorized as the universal definition for terrorism.

UN GLOBAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY

In September 2006, the UN General Assembly adopted the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy as a means to enhance counter-terrorism efforts at the national, regional, and international levels.¹⁸ This strategy has been reviewed and updated every two years since its adoption, with the most recent review taking place in June 2018. There are four pillars that are central to this strategy: "addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; measures to prevent and combat terrorism; measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard; (and) measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism" (A/RES/60/288). The Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov, stated that "governments at all levels are faced with a myriad set of responsibilities and challenges to respond to, counter, and prevent terrorism, as well as to address the conditions which give rise to terrorist and violent extremist

¹⁷ Security Council resolution 2178, Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, S/RES/2178 (2014) (24 September 2014), available from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2178>.

¹⁸ UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy | Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force. (2006). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctif/en/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy>.

groups and their narratives."¹⁹ The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) recently submitted a request for \$194 million to fund sixty different projects across different UN entities that will provide resources for counter-terrorism projects and measures. The monetary support provided will increase the capacity of stakeholders to effectively combat terrorism and violent extremism, as well as address the root causes.

LACK OF A UNIVERSAL DEFINITION OF TERRORISM

It seems almost intentional that the UN has failed to adopt a definition on terrorism, with many believing that this is to avoid internal conflict between the Security Council and other Member States. As it stands, States are largely able to interpret what defines terrorism on their own terms when enacting national laws that adhere to Security Council Resolutions; a universal definition would require many States to change their behavior, perhaps drastically, to adhere to the international standard. This demonstrates that differing political views among States may cause variance in what they are willing to accept or reject as terrorism. The issue remains that for some Member States, terrorism is a humanitarian issue, while for others it is a political one.

The Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, in his 2006 report, stated that "calls by the international community to combat terrorism, without defining the term, can be understood as leaving it to individual States to define what is meant by the term. This carries the potential for unintended human rights abuses and even the deliberate misuse of the term."²⁰ Ultimately, it impacts the UN's ability to develop a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy.

Without a concrete definition, it is difficult to adequately address the root causes behind acts of terrorism. Nevertheless, there are a variety of trends that can be identified in areas that have been most impacted by terrorism. For example, marginalization, inequality, high rates of unemployment,

¹⁹ UNOCT Consolidated Multi-Year Appeal (2019-2020) (Rep.). (2019). Retrieved <http://www.citationmachine.net/apa/cite-a-report/manual>.

²⁰ Kramer, H., & Yetiv, S. (2007). The UN Security Council's Response to Terrorism: Before and after September 11, 2001. *Political Science Quarterly*, 122(3), 409-432. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.whittier.edu/stable/20202886>.

corruption, and weak institutions are some of the conditions that allow terrorist groups to thrive.²¹ Additionally, lack of development and inclusive governments, extreme poverty, lack of education, and state violence can also be root causes behind terrorism.²² It is imperative that these issues be addressed and resolved so that terrorism does not continue to threaten global peace and security. Further, a commitment to human rights (political, civil, economic, social, cultural rights) is central in combatting terrorism, as terrorism thrives on hopelessness and despair, which helps terrorist groups appeal to disadvantaged and marginalized young people (between the ages of 17 and 27), who now make up the majority of recruits in terrorist organizations.²³

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

While terrorism has no common religion, race, or ethnicity, it does have a common agenda that specifically targets women as well as young people. Terrorist groups often thrive on the subjugation of women and girls; many rely on sexual slavery to finance their operations or use sexual violence as a means to achieve their goals.

Therefore, it is imperative that all measures to address terrorism include a gender perspective. This includes focusing on "(i) women and girls as victims of terrorism, (ii) women as perpetrators, facilitators, and supporters of terrorism, (iii) women as agents in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism, and (iv) the differential impact of counter-terrorism strategies on women and women's rights."²⁴ It is important to not only assess the impact that terrorism has on the livelihoods of women and girls, but also to incorporate their perspectives into counter-terrorism strategies. The role that women and girls play in matters of peace and security has greatly expanded since the passage of Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000. Security Council Resolutions 1820 and 1888 recognize sexual violence as a tactic used in conflict and a threat to international peace

²¹ Guterres, A. (2017, November 16). Counter-terrorism and human rights: Winning the fight while upholding our values. Speech presented at SOAS University of London. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-11-16/secretary-general's-speech-soas-university-london-counter-terrorism>.

²² Guterres 2017.

²³ Peace, justice and strong institutions - United Nations Sustainable Development. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>.

²⁴ Gender - United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee. (2019, February). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/focus-areas/gender/>.

and security. Security Council Resolution 2242 builds upon the existing women, peace, and security agenda, while also recognizing the various roles that women can play in combatting terrorism and calling for an assessment of the drivers that radicalize women. Women and girls traditionally have been targets for terrorist acts, but increasingly have become actors as well, including female foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs).²⁵ Thus, in order to accomplish SDG 16, incorporating a gender perspective into all strategies to combat terrorism is of paramount importance. This includes increasing women's representation throughout all levels of government, helping to build stronger and more inclusive institutions.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 16: PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

In 2015, Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which provides a road map for ensuring international peace and security. At its core are seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) covering a variety of thematic issues that commit Member States to achieving these goals through a global partnership. It is imperative that all stakeholders remain committed to striving towards full implementation of these goals. At the heart of this agenda is a hope that fulfilling these goals will help to strengthen universal peace, fulfilling the core mission of the United Nations since its founding. These goals build upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and it is the hope that full realization of the 2030 Agenda will "shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path" (A/RES/70/1 Preamble).²⁶ In addition, these goals are integrated and address the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The preamble for the 2030 Agenda states that peace is a central component of this agenda, as the UN is "determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development" (A/RES/70/1 Preamble). It is apparent that Sustainable Development Goal 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, is central to achieving all of the other goals, as none of the SDGs can

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Kumar, R. & Roy, P. (2018). War and peace: Is our world serious about achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030?. *Journal of family medicine and primary care*, 7(6), 1153–1156. doi:10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc_231_18.

be realized without first achieving global peace. Sustainable development and peace go hand-in-hand. Goal 16, Target 16A states its aim is to "strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime" (UN SDGs 16 Targets; emphasis added).²⁷

While there has been significant progress made in realizing the 2030 Agenda, and specifically SDG 16, violent extremism and terrorism threaten the progress that has been made. There are less than eleven years left to accomplish the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, it is extremely troubling that the 2018 Global Peace Index shows a decline in global peacefulness for the last four years, with country peacefulness falling by 0.27% from the previous year.²⁸ The last fifteen years have seen an increase in terrorist attacks, ultimately hindering full realization of the 2030 SDG Agenda. Consequently, the global community must reaffirm its commitment to eradicating terrorism and violent extremism in all of its forms.

CONCLUSION

The central mission of the United Nations is to maintain peace and security. Terrorism constitutes a grave threat to this mission. A number of actions have been taken to advance counter-terrorism measures, but the lack of consensus regarding a universal definition of terrorism weakens counter-terrorism strategies. Therefore, in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda, Member States may want to consider developing a consensual definition of terrorism in order to build more peaceful societies.

In addition, given the uneven progress in achieving SDG 16, there must be renewed efforts by Member States and other stakeholders to significantly advance progress towards the SDG 16 targets. First, data and reporting mechanisms for counter-terrorism and implementation of the SDGs must be strengthened. This will help to strengthen oversight and accountability, increasing the capacity of stakeholders to develop national planning frameworks. Second, there must be dedicated efforts to

²⁷ Peace, justice and strong institutions - United Nations Sustainable Development. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>.

²⁸ Kumar, R. & Roy, P. (2018). War and peace: Is our world serious about achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030?. *Journal of family medicine and primary care*, 7(6), 1153–1156. doi:10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc_231_18.

strengthen the rule of law at both the national and international levels, and ensure that there is equal access to justice for all people. Creating inclusive institutions and ensuring that no one is left behind will help to tackle the conditions that allow terrorism to thrive. Third, member states need to share best practices. And fourth, there must be increased financial commitments dedicated to address those factors which contribute to the rise of terrorism.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the root causes of terrorism?
2. What protections does your country have in place for victims of terrorism and acts of violent extremism?
3. Should there be an international definition for terrorism? How does your country feel about this issue? Does your country have a definition?
4. How many of the nineteen international legal instruments used for counter-terrorism is your country party to?
5. What measures has your country taken to successfully achieve SDG 16? Are there monitors in place that track SDG 16 indicators?
6. Where does your country stand in terms of progress on SDG 16 indicators? What steps have been taken to ensure progress is made?

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